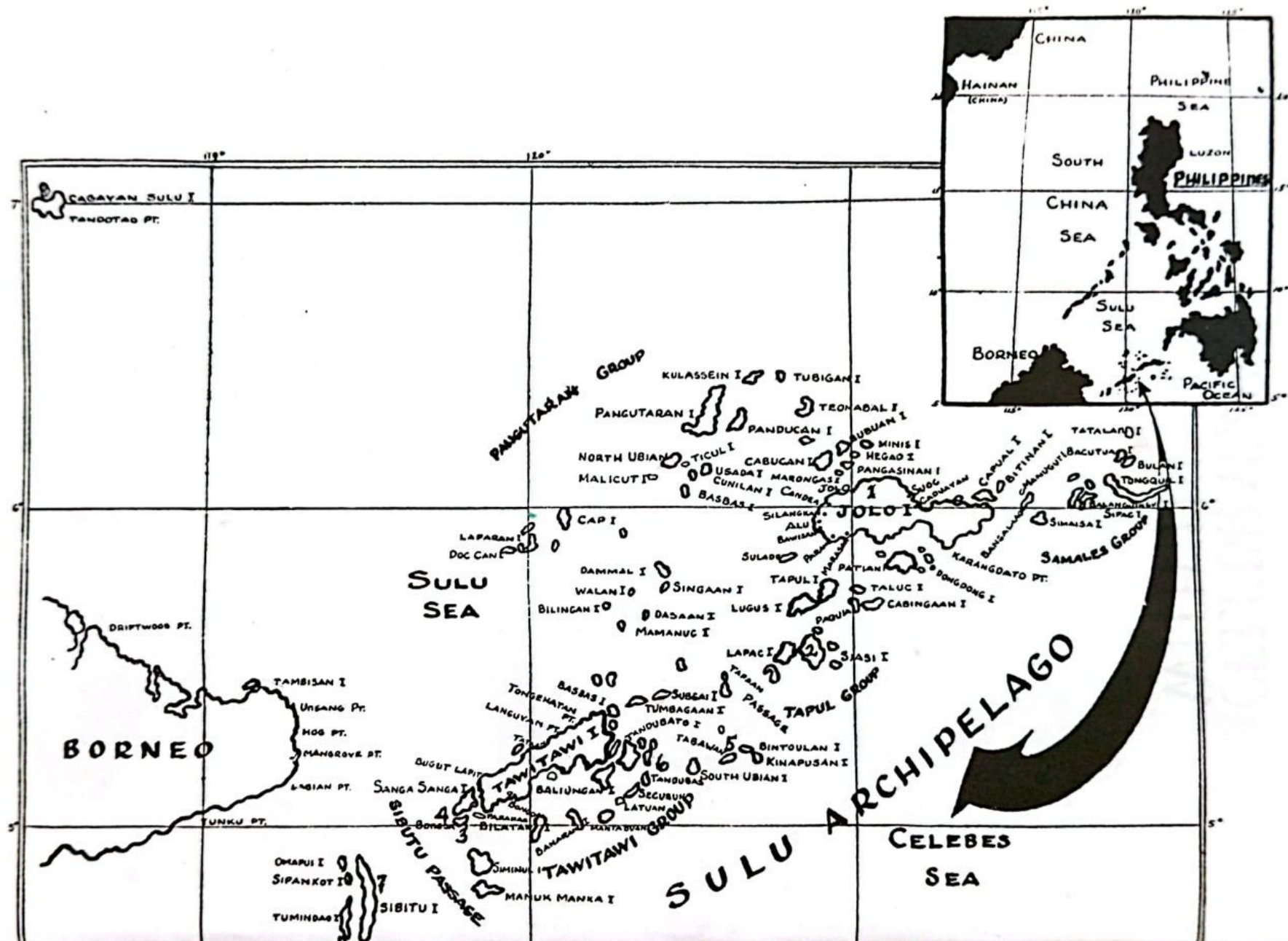




CELEBRATIONS WITH THE SUN



CELEBRATIONS WITH THE SUN

AN OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS PHENOMENA
AMONG THE BADJAOS



BRUNO BOTTIGNOLO



Ateneo de Manila University Press

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Foreword

AS THE READER will quickly discover, this work easily speaks for itself and requires no explication on my part. Dr. Bottignolo succeeds admirably here in giving us a compelling account of the ways in which a singular people comprehend both themselves and the particular world they inhabit.

The term *Badjao* is used here to refer to the most maritime of the Sama-speaking peoples of the Sulu archipelago. These people, it is worth noting, are not confined solely to the southern Philippines. Taken together, Sama speakers are in fact one of the most widely distributed cultural groups indigenous to Island Southern Asia, being found not only in Sulu and southwestern Mindanao, but in the Malaysian state of Sabah, east-coastal Kalimantan, Sulawesi, and over much of eastern Indonesia. Outside of the Philippines, the term *Badjao*—or more often, *Bajau*—is applied as a general term by outsiders to all of these peoples, not simply to the most maritime.

Regrettably relations between these peoples and more powerful populations ashore (such as the Tausug and Magindanao in the southern Philippines) have seldom been founded on mutual respect, and everywhere the Badjao, as a sea people, have tended to be marginalized, excluded from positions of power, despised, and confined to the lowest rungs of the social ladder. Part of their denigration has traditionally been framed in religious terms. Hence, neighboring groups have typically viewed them as a people “without religion” (*halam*

ugama). Dr. Bottignolo alludes to this view at the outset of his book and, more subtly, he shows it here to be wholly insupportable in reality.

Personally, I have only a fleeting knowledge of the people of whom Dr. Bottignolo writes. As an anthropologist, I have conducted my own research mainly among the related maritime Sama of the Semporna district of southeastern Sabah. This region, although connected by islands with central Sulu, and the destination today of Sulu refugees, is otherwise and in many ways quite different. There are, however, significant similarities as well. Thus, in Semporna, the human body similarly functions, for example, as a major cultural symbol; the same powerful juxtaposition of ancestors and spirits is present; and there is also a view of human life as noncyclic and final, followed by a transcendental state of being, as "ancestor" (*'mbo*), in which the individual is invisible yet, as the author writes, "immediate and accessible." Here, the author's account of these matters is, I find, highly illuminating.

Although he writes primarily as a student of religion, he is clearly mindful of the social setting in which beliefs take form and find expression. Another source of special interest is the connection he draws between religious and cosmological notions and the presence of the Badjao as a maritime people in a world of islands, winds, and tides, surrounded always by the potentially disorienting vastness of the sea itself.

I first met Dr. Bottignolo in Jakarta in 1993 at an international conference on Bajau communities. The conference paper he presented provoked rather more debate than is usual for conference papers. This was partly due, I think, to its generalizing character. But more contentious was the question posed, not explicitly but by the topic itself, of not so much whether the Badjaos have "religion" but of whether they should be considered "Muslims." This, clearly, is a complex issue. Given the way in which religion has traditionally worked to exclude and marginalize the sea people, it is not simply a question of tenets and practice, but is equally a matter of ethnic status, social identities, and collective perceptions. Yet, however complex the question is, I think it must be acknowledged as gathered from history and their practice today, that all

Sama speakers, including the most maritime, participate in a larger Islamic world, and that whatever form past perceptions may have taken, a full understanding of Badjao religion requires that it be seen ultimately within this wider context as well as in terms of its uniqueness. This, however, is a different project than the one which the author, quite sensibly, addresses here.

Finally, a particular merit of the author's presentation that follows is that he allows us, by the way he constructs this presentation, to enter intuitively into Badjao modes of religious experience and to appreciate the manner in which these singular people have come to cope with the more perplexing problems of human existence, among them, life and death and the periodicities of nature and the physical world.

— Clifford Sather
March 1995

Prologue

I MET HIM AT A PARTY, one of those parties traditional local leaders with political ambitions give on every occasion in the Sulu Archipelago of the South China Sea. Perhaps because I was the only Caucasian there, he wondered what it was that kept me in the region. When I told him that I was studying the Badjao religion, he asked with astonishment, "But do Badjaos have a religion?" He was a professor of sociology and had taught for eight years at the Mindanao State University!

His astonishment was due not so much to ignorance as to widespread low esteem of the Badjaos, who are simply looked down upon as primitives without a culture, without anything that can be called a religion—a people still doomed to superstition, with strange practices, God knows for what purpose.

This lack of esteem does not prevent one from identifying the Badjaos with the Muslims, so they appear in official statistics and among the local populace—but only to end up further discredited. In this context, in fact, Badjaos are regarded as ignorant Muslims, people who do not know their religion and do not practice it as it ought to be. So ignorant and low are they as to become distasteful to Allah himself. And so, among Muslims who know more of religion than the others, the lack of esteem becomes contempt.

Christians also regard the Badjaos as Muslims; except of course those who, considering themselves more informed, point out that the Badjaos are not really Muslims but only

"animists"—in other words, always rather primitive, superstitious creatures.

If one can still speak of animism—the whole idea is simply outmoded—I do not think this is a qualification suitable for the Badjaos. Are they Muslims? I should not be happy to commit myself to such a highly uncritical commonplace even though, correctly or incorrectly, they make use in their religious observances of names, prayers, and liturgical actions learned from the Muslims. But they do have a religion. It is not to be found among the great historical religions because it is typically Badjao. It is a religion which does not base its faith on a book, but rather organizes itself around a set of principles of a cosmic nature. These are conclusions I have drawn after four years of firsthand research there among them.

I arrived in the Philippines in mid-1987. Initially I divided my time between Mindanao, where I studied Islamized Malay people, and Manila, where I taught anthropology and phenomenology of religion. As I became interested in the study of sacrifices, I grew curious about the forms these might have assumed with maritime peoples. It was in this way that the Badjaos came into the picture, and I got in touch with them. My basic question was to remain unanswered. Apparently Badjaos do not have sacrifices. Nevertheless, in my association with them, I came to understand and appreciate their religious world more and more. This alone amply justified the long years I spent in the region of Tawi-Tawi, in the Sulu Sea.

In fact, from mid-1990 I found myself treading on the same area and dealing with the same people that the anthropologist H. Arlo Nimmo met some thirty years before. I settled, first of all, in Bongao, a bustling little town with a population of some thirty thousand, the main port and administrative center of the region. There I stayed for a year and a half, enjoying the rare opportunity of living in a Badjao village (Luuk Bangka), in a little house as a Badjao among the Badjaos. Later I moved to Tawi-Tawi itself, the island which gives the whole region its name. I took up residence in Bato Bato, a large settlement that hosts the town hall and the few other offices of the municipality (Panglima Sugala).

This municipality reaches out into the sea, and includes the Bilatan islands, one of which is a major island in a line of coral reefs and sandy ledges that run some ten kilometers south and parallel to Tawi-Tawi, enclosing a lagoonlike stretch of sea, busy with boats and people. The Badjaos of the region consider these islands their homeland of old and still look upon them as a last sanctuary. From there they often go up to Bato Bato to fetch water or sell their products. Interesting is the Saturday morning market, known as the Badjaos'. There they barter dry fish, shells, algae, and others with the local farmers from whom they obtain cassava, squash, sugarcane, bananas. Or they may get cloth from some outside peddler. In this second outpost I resided some two-and-a-half years, until the end of 1994.

During this time I met and related with quite a few Badjaos: young and old, male and female, ordinary folk and their political or religious leaders. I met them in every possible context: in the intimacy of their homes as well as outside on the open sea, in the marketplaces as well as in the course of their rituals. Ethnographic material was never lacking, and the result of my investigations I present in the following pages. It can be summarized as "an overview of the religious phenomenon among the Badjaos."

I am aware of the implications of choosing such a broad topic, as well as of the requirements imposed by the nature of the subject. Preference has been given to the perspective that values the researcher's personal observations, for example, paying attention to religious expressions, especially those sanctioned in formal rituals. In the persuasion that these are mystery plays, educational for the Badjaos celebrating them, they can thus be revealing to an anthropologist.

This approach eclipses the importance of the indigenous informers' explanations—definitely valuable, but riddled with ambiguity. In fact, as they can open insights and bring one into the middle of an understanding, so they can easily mislead. Indigenous informers convey interpretations, especially in the field of religion where the rationale of things is more hidden than revealed. This holds true also for the very people who practice any given religion. Ultimate meanings are

not easily accessible to them. More often than not, volunteered explanations are based on popular religious experiences. They may be perceptions of individuals moved by practical considerations or pressured by troublesome situations.

Reliance on the researcher's observations is practical also because, in the quest for meaning, one is not confined within the bounds of ethnographic data. Comparative analysis enters usefully here, making it possible to leap some final hurdles, which arise from the very nature of the religion in question. The first is that the Badjaos' ritual life shows a rich variety of forms, not all of which hold the same value. Careful selection has to be done in order to untangle what is typically Badjao from the borrowed, what is more primeval from the degraded, what is more specifically religious from what is simply local custom. Badjaos' circumcision, for example, cannot be listed with the *pag-tabok* or piercing of a girl's ear (a practice in this book not even discussed). Circumcision is one of the greatest human rites, while *pag-tabok* is only a local custom. In the circumcision one has the making of a man, while in the *pag-tabok* one has only the making of a hole.

Ultimately only on a background of comparative religion can different rituals and beliefs be evaluated and explained. Among other things, comparative religion appreciates the language of religious symbology. When, for example, the Badjaos say that Tuhan lives in the sky (chapter 2), this placement does not mean just a corner in space. The sky speaks of the "wholly other" and defines a radical diversity. This radical diversity established, Tuhan comes forward as a spirit ontologically different from all other spirits; and the attributes predicated of him assume a meaning ontologically different from those predicated of other spirits. So that if it is said that Tuhan has power superior to that of some other spirit, it is right away understood that one is talking about two radically different kinds of power.

This approach is crucial when dealing with *saitan* (chapters 2 and 4): spirits which occasionally hurt people and consequently might be mistakenly associated with evil spirits, that is, ordinary created beings. However, *saitan* take up residence in rocks and trees, forms which in religious symbology show

special significance. Moreover, knowledge of their presence comes through a religious experience. Such important observations warn that one is not in the presence of ordinary spirits. In reality *saitan* are ierophanies. Their dangerousness is nothing other than the negative aspect of the ambiguity of the sacred. And the Badjaos' concern to keep them at a distance is an idiom through which the attraction-repulsion typical of the sacred is expressed.

Again, familiarity with the subject matter of comparative religion makes it easier to recognize the rationality behind religious behavior. This in turn frees the researcher anxious for explanations from too easy recourse to private revelations. Private revelations among the Badjaos, supposedly come from the spirit-bearers, the so-called *djins* (chapters 5 and 6), which are too readily called "shamans" and their role reduced to that of seers. This prejudiced and reductionist explanation lowers the Badjao religion to the level of make-believe and misinterprets the *djins'* phenomenon, which after all is not so revelatory and, on the other hand, covers a much wider area of the Badjaos' social life.

A second hurdle arises from the fact that the Badjaos' religion, like most primitive religions, finds its expression in a congeries of emotions, customs, and rituals which punctuate an ongoing experience rather than form a system of structured beliefs. Although this experience does not happen in a completely ideational vacuum, still it never comes forward with a justifying system of thought. To penetrate and explain religious experiences one cannot help but rely heavily on phenomenology of religion. When explanations do not come easily from the Badjao phenomena, they have to be interpreted from similar phenomena occurring in other religions.

If there is any betrayal of the Badjaos' religiosity, it is not in the choice of sources and methods of analysis. Rather it lies in the fact that—in the process of explaining—the Badjaos' religious experience might come to appear as a highly structured system of beliefs and rituals, which primarily it is not. Overemphasizing, though, the conceptual context of a religious experience cannot be avoided if one is to bring it home to the reader.

With this in mind, this work should prove useful to those who have some knowledge of cultural anthropology; especially those who, lacking special training in the field of religious studies, might otherwise have to labor long to find an adequate explanation of the various Badjao religious phenomena.

But this work may be interesting also to lay readers, like the peoples among whom the Badjaos live. It is sad to see how little they know about the religious aspect of the Badjaos' life; and how easily, because of this ignorance, they tend to look down upon these neighbors of theirs. Above and beyond, I hope this presentation may reach those many persons who have heard about this people and wish to know them better. To make it easy to read, I avoided overloading the book with discussion or quotations. For the same reason, the work does not limit itself to an analytical perspective but tries also to be descriptive, dwelling in particular on the actual interpretation the Badjaos make of their symbols.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part dwells on "the sacred," and focuses on the Badjao orthopistis (right belief). The second part regarding "the celebration" is on rituals, and presents the Badjao orthodoxy (right praise).

This is not the order that describes the process I went through in my field research. In fact, I started off by observing the religious practices and only from and through their study did I come to understand the Badjao system of thought and beliefs. A case in point is the theme that, like a leitmotif, runs throughout the whole book: the discussion about Umboh, a mysterious being who dominates the entire Badjao existence. The first hint I had about his existence came not from the Badjaos but from a casual conversation with a young Sama lady, who, however, referred to him to show that Badjaos were "superstitious."

Slowly I came to discover more about the overriding significance of this being and his personality. This discovery was unraveled through meticulous observation and study of the Badjaos' ritual behavior: in the position that the women take when in labor, in the timing and the play of orientations in the marriage, in the laying out of the body of a person who has just died (chapter 9). These are, somehow, all corollaries

dependent upon the *pag-umboh*: the Umboh's own ritual, which also develops in a set of timings and orientations (chapter 3).¹ Meaningfully, the *pag-umboh* is often used as a healing ritual (chapter 8) and when women give birth (chapters 8 and 9). In its prayers and symbols this ritual makes lively references to the world of vegetation and the ancestors (chapter 3). Its main metaphor is the human body where particular attention is given to the head (chapter 3), whose symbolic meaning finds an echo: in the headaches of the imam when not properly recompensed (chapter 5), in the anointing of the head of the djin-bearer (chapter 5), in the *sundok* or stone placed on a grave to indicate "where the head is" (chapter 9). It is a ritual that, in the context of comparative religion, reveals itself as of solar structure, and this further explains the Badjaos' faith about Umboh.

But instead of beginning with the Badjaos' ritual behavior to explain Umboh, I chose to describe the personality of Umboh and its ideology first, in order to better explain their religious practices. I have done this for two reasons: first of all because this sequence is the order that one finds in the religious man, who believes first; and because he believes, celebrates. This is also the order in which religious experience takes shape. For this very reason, when dealing with the great religious traditions, one usually studies their books first. The Badjao religious man does not have books; but this does not mean the Badjao religious man does not think.

Secondly, such an expository order allows a factual description of a ritual without absolutizing it. For example, one will hardly come across two *pag-umboh* celebrated in the same way. Within the rightful form of praise, in fact, various elements, more or less important, may appear or disappear, as a habit or in the spontaneity of the moment. This is because, even for the Badjao, the religious experience is a living experience. These variants are elaborations of some basic belief. This basic belief is paramount, not the appearance or disappearance of some form of expression.

Holding onto this conviction, a researcher, when reporting and describing a ritual, has the option to choose and present any correct form of celebrating—one among the

many—aware that it is not the only one, and aware that other researchers may choose and present others instead. The readers for their part can take all different presentations—those in my book, those presented by the anthropologists of the past, and those which in future will be presented—as noncontradictory. For these varied descriptions of the pagumboh or of any other rite can, in fact, all be valid expressions of one and the same belief.

1

Introduction

The Badjao World and Concept of Time

THE BADJAOS HAVE BEEN DESCRIBED as "the gypsies of the sea."² It is a fascinating image. Westerners especially like it. In it is a touch of the exotic and mysterious. It evokes faraway times and places. It portrays pictures of people wandering on the sea, a hippie's way of life, not burdened with responsibility, trusting in the benevolence and abundance of nature, a happy people in a happy world.

The tourist upon encountering them, however, is disappointed. These sea gypsies are poor—clothed in rags, barefoot, their skin weather-beaten and burned by the sun. They are bony persons who have never known abundance. Their faces bear the marks of labor and suffering.

In the presence of the tourist, the people among whom the Badjaos live cannot hide their amazement. They find it difficult to understand how someone could come all the way from the other side of the world just to see them. We need not say how these people describe the Badjaos. They just call them bad names. This habit has no justification. But it is understandable. Give people a bad name and you can dispense with them.

The Badjaos live in Southeast Asia. Some belong to an ethnic group that dwells in the region of the Tropic of Cancer, scattered among the different islands from the northeast of Borneo up to Mindanao in the southernmost part of the

Philippines. They regard themselves neither as Malaysians nor as Filipinos. They are Badjaos. They subdivide themselves into various tribes. One tribe may be present in several villages on different islands. In this book, the Badjaos referred to are those of the Tawi-Tawi region.

THEIR WORLD

Searching history is not of much use in studying the Tawi-Tawi Badjaos. They have no written tradition, and they have little oral tradition. To discover their past is a guessing game. The great question posed by this game is: "Where do they come from?" The notions our Badjaos have on this matter do not stretch very far in time and space. Generally they speak of coming from this or that island. They are simply indigenous.⁵

Many reasons that explain their way of life can be found in their social system—that is, in the system of relationships that the Badjaos maintain with the neighboring population. In the area are some Chinese communities and various groups of Christian immigrants. Two ethnic groups predominate: the Tausug and the Sama.

In the Tawi-Tawi region the Sama are not only the majority, but can be considered the original settlers of the place. The Badjaos are part of this ethnic group. The Sama group in fact is divided into several subgroups, scattered among various islands. Each island has its own dialect. These dialects are variations of one and the same language: Sinama. The language of the Badjaos is one of these derivations.

But unlike the Badjaos, all the other Sama subgroups appear as ancestral proprietors of the place where they reside. They identify with their island and they consider it their land. They reside there rather permanently. Aside from fishing, they practice agriculture. Unlike the Badjaos, all the other Sama subgroups follow the Islamic religious tradition. As a whole, always excluding the Badjaos, all these subgroups form themselves into a large social entity, from which some family groups emerge noted for wealth, power, and prestige. This, in the common language, is the Sama people. The Badjaos, in practice, are a separate tribe.

Badjaos live on the sea, but they do not refuse to till the land. They till it when they can borrow it. They have no land which they can call their own. They are a tribe that never succeeded in landing so as to set foot for good on solid ground. The case of the Badjaos who reside today in Luuk Bangka is emblematic. In the past they were living along the coast of the island of Sanga Sanga. When, in 1972, their village was caught in the crossfire between the government troops and the Moro rebels, they took to their boats and left. A small fleet of desperate fugitives, they stopped offshore from Pasiagan on the island of Bongao, where they could not disembark. The local people would not allow them. There were no other places where those Badjaos could go. They remained in their boats for days, tossed by the tides and the currents. They were struck by a typhoon. Many got sick. Finally, the Christian missionaries of Bongao who came to know of their situation invited them to moor offshore their land. Those Badjaos still live here today.

Tausug, Chinese, and Christian people, though not indigenous, come and establish themselves in the area without great difficulty. It is particularly easy for the Tausugs. Natives of the neighboring region, they have always been at home in Tawi-Tawi. They are relatively numerous. They dominate political life. They impose themselves, relying on the solidarity of their clans, their control of economic resources, and the use of brute force. The Chinese have also been living in the area for a long time. They find security behind a wall of discretion and economic power. The Christians use their learning and skills in the administrative sector.

The Badjaos, on the other hand, are a tribe without advantages. They seem not to have any internal organization. They do not have a family group that is prominent on the basis of prestige or power. They cannot stand on their own and defend any of their rights. They could never venture into a "Badjao war."

In the midst of a land-based society, as individuals, the Badjaos cannot assert themselves. Among those who try the path of education and obtain a title, almost nobody finds an adequate job. Administrative offices are reserved for other clientele. In the business world, Badjaos find themselves iso-

lated and endangered by the competitiveness—there is much unscrupulous greed around. Acquisition of property only results in making a Badjao more vulnerable. There is no choice. To live on the land a Badjao has to comply with and accept the authority and the abuses of others. Outside a patron-client relationship, there is no possibility of survival.

One will find the Badjao always under orders, employed in jobs that need no specialization, jobs that others do not want to do. He only avoids having to deal with garbage. He is used as a laborer in some Chinese stores, or as a transporter in some sawmill, or as a docker at the port, and so forth. Though this is not so obvious, he is oftentimes actually working for a third party when he is seen with his boat, begging below passenger ships.

Putting up some valuable objects as collateral, he borrows the money needed to buy medicine, or rice for a celebration. From the merchant, he receives on credit the food and the material necessary for a fishing trip, with the promise of selling back upon his return all the fish caught, or all the fish of a certain quality. At times he does not even own his small boat. It could be the property of somebody else who expects to receive a certain amount of fresh fish each day in exchange. There is no Badjao who, in one way or another, is not in debt.

Nevertheless, living in debt for the Badjaos has its advantages. It is a form of dependence which indirectly assures employment. It assures, above all, a form of protection. Should something bad happen to a Badjao, the creditor also would end up losing. Otherwise the Badjao's life has no value.

It is not unusual for Badjaos not to receive due compensation for their work. Sometimes they are repaid only with contempt or even threats. This is a limit situation. The Badjaos know by then that the time has come to get their boat and leave. As a people, the Badjaos have been able to survive only because they knew how to avoid confrontation.

Precarious Existence

The Badjao village can be found in whatever bay is open to them, or whatever protected enclosure in the sea.

Oftentimes it rises off uncultivated lands—lands that appear to be nobody's. It rises on stilts, just outside the coast, on the tidal flats, where those who own no land build their huts.

The Badjao hut is generally one room. Walls and roof are of nipa. But one can also easily see some huts with walls of plaited bamboo. The floor is of rather rough wooden planks, often loose and unconnected. Always on stilts, this flooring extends outside in front of the hut and serves as a veranda. Among the various huts still on loose planks, a labyrinth of small bridges unwinds, linking the various dwelling places with one another, making them into a village and connecting the village to firm ground.

In this small world suspended above the sea, the little children play. The women wash clothes, dye the fibers for the *tepol* (woven grass mats), dry fish, cook food. The men mend nets, repair fishing tackle, drydock boats. The hut remains the most well-used place, even during the day. Here, one rests, finds shelter from the sun while working, entertains occasional visitors.

To reach the sea down below, a ladder or a wooden plank with a series of horizontal rungs, or a pole with notches, is fixed between the hut and the tidal flat. There, under the hut, small boats are kept tied. With these the Badjaos move—from one end of the village to the other, and from the village to the shore to gather wood, get potable water, or go to the market. In these small boats, they go to their bigger boats anchored out at sea.

Among these seacraft, the *lepa* merits special attention. It is the boat that has characterized the Badjaos and made them famous, although only a few *lepa* are seen now at sea. A *lepa* is eight meters long, and a meter-and-a-half wide. Very flat, often with outriggers, it glides very slowly over the sea. Often poorly covered with nipa, pieces of plywood, or metal sheet, it has the appearance of a mound of drifting garbage. Today the Badjaos use bigger and more comfortable boats. The most common shape and tonnage is that of the *kumpit*, a big boat of nine to ten meters long, and more than two meters wide at the center, and more or less of the same depth.

When at home, in their own village, the Badjaos use the *kumpit* as an extension of their hut. At least during the day,

there is always somebody in the kumpit. One can easily see a Badjao going to and from it throughout the day. There the Badjao spends time, busy with various activities that could also be done at home: cooking, fixing fishing tackle, drying fish. For some—at least for certain periods—it is the preferred residence. However, only for a few does it serve as the only residence, and they are the poorest. In this case, both the boat and the people living there are called *palau*, a term with negative connotations.

Most Badjaos occasionally use the kumpit as a provisory and temporary residence, usually when they go on what can be called the grand fishing expeditions. For their daily needs, Badjaos fish near the village. But sometimes, when more money is needed for the celebration of a wedding or the payment of a debt, a more extensive form of fishing is necessary. Then they move to more distant seas. They go out in teams for as long as a month. They live almost exclusively aboard the boats. They bring along with them almost everything necessary for living and working. The rest they procure by bartering with part of the catch, exchanging with the inhabitants of the islands they encounter on their way. Some fishermen bring their families along with them. This is sometimes because they can be of help; at other times because, if left at home without a breadwinner, they may go hungry.

A kumpit becomes particularly useful when an entire family is compelled to live far from home for some days. Perhaps a woman is about to give birth or a sick person needs the specific experience of a certain healer or admission to a clinic far away; or news arrives that some relative on another island is sick or has died, and one wants to join in the funeral services. The occasion could be a wedding or a family feast, or a kinsfolk meeting to discuss a certain problem or to exchange assistance, or a simple friendly visit. In these cases, Badjaos find it convenient to temporarily close their hut and leave, bringing along relatives, together with their few belongings and fishing gear.

There are never journeys without a destination. A Badjao points to an island and puts down anchor in a bay where there is a Badjao village with relatives and friends. Here the

newly arrived can easily find hospitality and temporary residence. Among the Badjaos, hospitality is customary. Even when visiting Badjaos have to stay for several days, they will not have to depend solely on their kumpit. Most of their time will be spent in the village, in the huts with relatives and friends, where they are entertained, and invited to eat and, often, sleep during the night.

These temporary migrations can lead one to think that the Badjaos live in boats. The kumpit loaded with people and belongings readily becomes a symbol of their nomadism, but this is an image far removed from reality. The Badjaos do not spend their time on the high seas, wandering there aimlessly. That would be the equivalent of exposing oneself unnecessarily to the dangers of nature and the violence of pirates. Even the family which, by necessity or by choice, uses the boat as its sole residence, moves in the open sea only when needed. The rest of the time is spent with the boat anchored in some bay, near a Badjao village where a relative or an acquaintance resides.

The hut is not only a shelter from the sun or bad weather. It is also a dwelling place. There are no Badjaos who are not fond of their poor hut. They personalize it, decorating it with posters and flowers. Construction and maintenance of a hut cost money, and for the Badjaos it represents a major investment. It is the primary, even if always precarious, link to the village and the island. When migrants return, they look under the water for the remaining poles which were once part of their hut. They love to point to it as a proof of their belonging to the village, of their sense of community.

Nevertheless, the Badjao hut is always a provisory reality. Like the planks of these gangways and the flooring of their huts, life for the Badjaos is uncertain. For them, everything human is impermanent. The future especially is out of their hands. Are the Badjaos fearful persons therefore? It is difficult to know. They are sharp people, but above all prudent. They know that their only defense is fleeing. The only way out from society and from danger is on the sea. Here they are at home. On the sea they live, move, and find their ultimate refuge. This is why the Badjaos are sea-oriented people.

Not all Badjaos own a kumpit. As a matter of fact, few do. But those without one dream of it. For a Badjao without a kumpit is a person without escape.

Badjao Geography

As they themselves put it, the Badjaos move by "boating from island to island." In this way they experience the world, and from this first experience they visualize it. The world is like a grand archipelago, a handful of islands on an endless sea.

The islands define Badjao geography and are their point of reference. A world without islands is a world without direction. Were one to find himself in the open sea with no islands in sight, he would get worried. It means that he is lost. "Even my father was once lost," explained a young Badjao. "He was out fishing when a strong wind caught him by surprise and he lost his direction. There were no islands in sight and for four days he wandered in the sea not knowing where he was going. Finally he saw an island and found his direction. He was in Borneo."

Whatever might be beyond the archipelago they are not interested in knowing. Were they to always navigate in one direction, without turning to the right or to the left, they would not know where they would arrive. They have no experience of this, they explain. Perhaps they would find themselves "where the sky ends." They do not know how the world is shaped, a subject of which they have no experiences. They then add, "As long as we live, we shall never know it." They therefore do not pose questions of this sort. They add, "We just trust in Tuhan." The world, like their life, is in the hands of the divine powers.

The Badjao world, seen symbolically, describes a religious geography. Here, two very distinct cosmic areas are found: the sky and the earth. The sky, inaccessible, is a finger pointed towards the beyond—the realm of transcendent realities. In general, in the Badjao cosmology, there is no mention of a "new life" after death. But when exposed to an eschatological vision and asked to visualize the final place where each person is destined, the Badjao locates it somewhere in the sky. With a gesture of the hand, the Badjao indicates a place at the

same time up there and far towards the horizon. More precisely, there should be a paradise—called *surgah*—where the good spirits go, and a hell—called *narkah*—where the spirits of the bad go. Where are they found? “We, Badjaos,” they explain, “believe that *surgah* and *narkah* are not here on earth.”

Narkah therefore is not to be found on earth. Nor under the earth. There is not an “underworld,” or a world of the dead, to be found under the earth. It would be too material. It would no longer be in the order of the beyond.

Sign and symbol of the beyond, the sky becomes a revelation on the nature of the spiritual realities and beings that “are like the wind.” In the sky “reside” Tuhan, the absolute supreme being, Umboh, the mythical Badjao ancestor, and all the various historical ancestors. The sun that moves in the sky takes on sacred connotations recognized and used by the Badjaos in several rites.

The earth is altogether something else. It is the world of the substantial. It is populated by sacred presences, the *saitan*, most of all on land. The sea seems to have a rather limited religious relevance. Perhaps it is too familiar a reality. On the sea, Badjaos are at home. They live there. They use it. Obviously there are *saitan* also in the sea, for there reside dangers. But the greatest dangers are on dry land where the *saitan* of the rocks and the trees abound.

With the *saitan*, the world becomes populated with sacred presences that consecrate it. The stranger venturing on the seas frequented by the Badjaos cannot but notice pieces of cloth, brightly colored or worn by time, hanging from bushes, trees, or rocks along the coast. Those are the remains of banners that the Badjaos use to honor the various *saitan*. The cloths mark sacred dwelling places and describe a sacred geography. The Badjaos live and move in a sacralized space.

IN TIME

The true age of a Badjao is not known. When asked a child's age, the parents are clearly taken by surprise. They answer by turning the question back to the one who asked,

"In your opinion, how old do you think he is?" Any rough estimate is good enough. This is the way the problem is solved when the little Badjao arrives for the first time in school. Along with a place in class, notebooks, and pencils, the child receives an age and a date of birth. So the few who go to school all end up being born on a national holiday, or the birthdays of their teacher's children, or simply the first day of school. The whole matter anyway, for them, is of no importance. The Badjaos do not have an "age."

Years

Marking the passage of the year is simply a matter of indifference—but not of ignorance. The Badjaos are aware of annual recurrences. They know that "each year" the feast of Hari Raya is celebrated. This is the local name for Eidil Fitr, the Islamic feast that concludes the month of Ramadhan, when the so-called "breaking of the fast" becomes an occasion for feasting and visiting relatives, friends, and neighbors. It is not a Badjao festival. It is only part of the cultural baggage the Badjaos carry because they live among Islamized peoples. Very few celebrate it. Rather than being part of their tradition, this recurrence is more a convenient reference point.

They can, for example, let it be known that a certain marriage will take place "after Hari Raya." They do not know how to explain when Hari Raya takes place. They do not have the slightest idea how long one has to wait for it. Neither do they have the elements to define the waiting period, nor do they bother in the first place to define it. This "date" only has a value in the sense that, once it has been decided that the marriage is going to take place after Hari Raya, the Badjaos wait. They will recognize the coming of the feast only on "the day on which the Muslims celebrate." Again, one may hear that a certain person "will arrive after Hari Raya." In this case, the phrase often indicates simply an imprecise "date" in a rather remote future.

More relevant for the Badjaos is the yearly celebration of the Umboh Pai Baha-o (the Umboh of the New Rice). It represents the most important liturgical event of the Badjaos. As

understood even from its name, the recurrence is connected with the rice harvest, around the month of August. The celebration takes place during the immediately succeeding days. Not that the Badjaos follow a seasonal cycle and know how to place these days in time. Agricultural work is not part of their way of life. The season of harvest, like that of planting, is not known. As with the Hari Raya, it is "from the others" that the Badjaos learn of the coming of the season of the new rice. Only "when the palay (unhusked rice) appears in the market" do they know that the time of the celebration has come.

The Umboh Pai Baha-o does not mark a collective feast. It is celebrated within the family circle or among a small group of families connected with one another in some way. For the celebration, each group chooses the time most convenient for them. Any "date" around the prescribed time will do. The period lasts for around one month and a half. The recurrence of the Umboh Pai Baha-o, therefore, does not mark a "date" in time, clear and valid for all. Unlike Hari Raya, it is not so easily used in daily language as a point of reference in describing the sequence of other events. The Umboh Pai Baha-o indicates a "date," but a rather private one.

The Hari Raya, an Islamic feast, is linked to the lunar calendar. The Umboh Pai Baha-o, on the other hand is a seasonal celebration linked to the solar calendar. Based on two different calendars, the relationship between these two feast times is not permanent, but changes year after year. The Badjaos, however, do not appear to be very aware of this variability. In other cultures, these two feasts can be interpreted as "a fixed feast and a movable one" or as "two movable feasts." For the Badjaos, they are simply "two feasts." The Badjaos do not care to measure the time that may pass between the two feasts.

The solar year is eventually noticed in the periodicity of the winds on the local seas. All the Badjaos know of the winds' cyclic succession, a succession visualized in space. To the Badjaos their direction is of concern. The different winds come, one after the other, moving in their directions as if in a circle in space. Of particular concern is what each wind brings. For example, certain winds cause sudden storms.

The Badjaos know even the approximate duration of some winds. Some last longer, while others only blow for a few days. They know that all together these winds describe a temporal cycle called the year. With some effort and a bit of confusion, when asked, some manage to connect the recurrence of the Umboh Pai Baha-o with the time in which certain winds blow. This is the time of the *habagat*, a wind from the south.

But placing various recurrences or future happenings in time remains foreign to the Badjaos' way of thinking. Be it defined according to the Islamic religious tradition, or taken from the events that mark the solar cycle, the year as a unit of measurement is not used. Years are not measured. Much less are they counted.

Months

The lunar month is more relevant to the Badjao. One finds it reflected in the cycle of tides, and Badjao life is shaped by the movement of the tides. "Badjaos follow the wave." They seek the *bullah*. This term describes a concentration of fish and the more favorable moment for fishing.

The *bullah* comes at low tide. The fisherman therefore does not always wake up at the same time to go fishing. It all depends on the day in the cycle of the tides, and on the place where one intends to fish. In most cases, when a Badjao goes fishing near the village, he leaves the house only at the last moment. When he intends to move a bit farther out, he wakes up in time to get to the right place when low tide comes.

He can also go out at night. When there is a moon, he fishes with hook and line. When there is no moon, he uses a lantern, and fishes with the net. Badjaos say that the fish gather around the light, and a sort of artificial *bullah* is created. All in all, Badjao fishing is very logical, even though to modern people it may appear a bit esoteric.

In organizing their daily activities, Badjaos base their calculations on the movement of the tides. They observe the moon. The lunar month, therefore, is embodied in the economic and social life of the Badjao. As a unit of measure,

one knows it and uses it. "I arrived last month" or "I will stay outside to fish for a month" are expressions that are used and have a meaning among the Badjaos—naturally, a very relative meaning. In fact "a month" for the Badjaos is a rather elastic time frame. It can mean from twenty to forty days. In truth, for the Badjaos, time has no value. If, for example, Badjaos agree to accomplish a task within a certain time, what they are concerned with is only the task. The time it will take to do it the Badjaos consider secondary.

Dates

Badjaos do not conceive of time as a mathematical progression, but as a succession of moments. Each moment stands on its own, apart. Each has its own proper value. Nonsignificant moments have a minimal value. It were as if they did not exist. Consequently Badjaos do not use either the Muslim or the Christian calendar. Those who have one at home keep it as a decoration. The few who know how to read it, consider their knowledge a sign of simple erudition. The same is true for the watch. The Badjao who has one wears it as an ornament. Oftentimes the Badjao does not know how to use it. Sometimes the watch does not even function. Most of the time it is kept at home as an object of value, an investment to be used in times of economic difficulty.

What counts are the significant moments. These constitute real time, the only time that really exists. These can be personal moments like a particular encounter, or a family event such as the birth of a child. These can be moments of social relevance like the feast of Hari Raya. Or historical like the exodus of the Badjao group from Sanga Sanga to Luuk Bangka. Or cosmic like a particular typhoon or an eclipse.

Through these moments, Badjaos measure and eventually control the flow of time. These are used as dates, points of reference in relation to which time extends "before" and "after." Age, if spoken of, is not defined in number of years but in relation to a contemporaneous event which occurred before or after one was born.

The moon as a measure of time is not valued ultimately for the length of its cycle but rather for one of its phases: the full moon. This generates a series of social events. When the moon shines up in the sky, down below the Badjao village dresses up in a glimmer of pearl. Under its beams, people linger in the open. They sit outside the huts, near the door, or around the last fires of supper. The young gather in groups, set apart in some corner, talking, singing. The children seem the most absorbed in the exuberant atmosphere; they move from hut to hut and fill the village with life. "When there is a full moon, the Badjaos celebrate."

Traditionally, the grand Badjao rites are celebrated during the days of the full moon. Practicality suggests this. The lunar light evokes a community atmosphere which favors the creation of those celebrations that necessarily accompany every rite. The full moon, while marking out the passage of time, also defines a recurring point of reference: an original event to measure time before and after. Ultimately, this is where the Badjao calendar is found.

SEARCHING FOR A MEANINGFUL TIME

Different from the sun which never dies, the moon is born, grows, declines, and dies to be reborn again. The moon knows death. The life of the moon becomes a metaphor about life in general. "To die like the moon"—as will be seen—describes a certain kind of existence. Awareness of this presupposes a reflection on the life of the moon. The periodic character of this way of existence is summarized in the three principal phases: full moon—new moon—full moon. The number three, which marks the rhythm of this lunar frequency, is perceived as a sort of DNA of lunar living or existing.

The magic-religious implications of the number three find an application in the structure of an amulet which seems to be very popular among the Badjaos. This is a knotted cord that the adults wear tied around the waist, while children carry it slung on the shoulder. Usually it is made by an imam during a short liturgical action. Praying, seated in front of a bowl

of incense, he stretches and knots a string above the rising smoke. In this way he successively produces a series of knots in which the sacred power generated in the prayer is imprisoned. The number of knots can be indefinite. But among these, three are set apart. These are the three knots that have a special power and make up the amulet.

People explain the power of the three knots with a series of symmetries, images of existential sequences. The most common sequence is "life-death-life," an implicit indication of the three lunar phases. Another sequence is "love-hate-love." The various sequences, and the three knots of the amulet, suggest the idea of the "being in becoming." They describe an existential becoming full of optimism, notwithstanding its negative vicissitudes, always triumphal in the end. This is the small soteriology which the Badjaos seek to harness for themselves by carrying the amulet.

There is more to it. Beginning from the original astronomical consideration and contemplation of the lunar phases "full moon-new moon-full moon," this magic number is sought and recognized in other aspects of reality. The number three is recognized in specific moments of the moon's life. There are three nights when the moon does not appear because the new moon is being formed. These are the three nights that "bring the new moon." The number three then assumes a new meaning, this time "generative." This symbolic reading is echoed in the saying, "The new moon brings the new sea." The experiential observation of the return of the tides with the return of the new moon is described as a "regeneration" of the sea, and with the sea, a regeneration of life. Badjaos "live with the tides," be it for their daily activities or for fishing.

In particular "the moon is the calendar of the women." The Badjaos know that "the moon is not the cause of menstruations, because these, in fact, do not come at the same time for all women, and each woman has variations in her period." Still they cannot avoid noticing symmetries. "Between the cycle of the woman and the cycle of the moon, there is some relation."

Badjao women do not keep track of their cycles. "Menstruation comes when it comes." They notice it only when they experience physical discomfort like a stomachache and must

determine whether this is connected with the menstrual cycle or an indication of something else, like pregnancy. When a woman becomes pregnant, the conception is said to have taken place "three months before" an eventual "missing menstruation."

The calculation seems reasonable, even from the point of view of modern medicine. In the Badjao mind, the "missing menstruation" is not the first one missed but the one whose absence was first noticed, really the second. There is here an echo of Islamic customs, where divorce is made final and any possible paternity is forestalled if the couple waits for the preferred period of two months.

More than this, the Badjao calculation centers on the significance of the number three. This number is a magic number that can assume meaningful values in the rise and development of life. The period of time between conception and the knowledge of pregnancy is not seen in terms of menstrual periods but in terms of "months," or more accurately in terms of moons. The two lunar months are measured by the passing of three equal moons: first, the moon of conception, followed by that of the first missed but unnoticed menstruation, followed finally by the moon of the second missed menstruation of which, as observed, one takes particular notice. This way of counting moons, in truth, is not normal. It seems that it can be traced back to the need to connect the number three to the development of the fetus.

With the generative symmetries in mind, the pregnant meaning of the "three moons" preceding the second missed menstruation becomes understandable. As we have seen, they are not really three moons; but by fiddling a bit with logic, the moons can be counted in such a way that even here the magic of the number that generates life can be recognized. They are the three moons that mark the rising of a new life. In this context, the amulet of the three knots is also enriched with meanings and powers. Not only does it guarantee the continuity of an individual life simply by protecting the one wearing it, but it guarantees the continuity of life's generative forces against any forthcoming strain on the existential rhythm.

For this lunar number's power to be availed of, it is used at every opportunity, mainly in connection with the social rites

such as initiations and marriages. When possible, the actual celebrations tend to extend in time, up to a span of three evenings: as if to state that in those three nights of the full moon, that particular cosmic becoming takes shape and gives rise to new social realities—the new man, the new woman, or the new family.

To sustain these celebrations three instruments are played. The *agong* occupies a special place and is indispensable in the marriage rite. But it is never played alone. "Absolutely never." Two other instruments also must be played. Without three instruments, there will be no music. As an example, on the occasion of one marriage, the owner of the *gabbang* (native xylophone), angry, took his musical instrument and went home. The celebration was suspended until he was convinced to bring back his instrument. Sometimes in order to make the number of instruments complete, it is not unusual for an empty plastic container, or even tin cans, to be played like a drum.

The Mythical "Dialogue on Life"

The Badjaos have a story, which has some variations. This is more or less how it goes. "Once upon a time, long ago, Tuhan let men know that they were supposed to die. But they could choose how. They could die like the moon and be born again, each month. Or they could die like the tree and eventually be replaced by new trees. The people chose the latter. Because of this, even though men die, there will always be people in the world."

The generic Badjao term for "men" can indicate the entire human race, but generally it stands for the Badjao people. In some variants, the story explicitly speaks of a choice, presented by Tuhan "to the Badjaos." Some narrate that the choice was presented "to the ancestors." Others say that it was presented directly "to Umboh," the mythical ancestor, the true and only Badjao ancestor from whom all the historical ancestors, by analogy, receive their name and prestige.

This dialogue between Tuhan and the Badjaos took place "once upon a time, long ago." This is not simply in the past. In some variants, the story sets the event "at the beginning

of times." The Badjaos think of time in three different *senses*. First, the time "since always" or "eternal" is the time in which the absolute beings live: Tuhan and, in their own way, the saitan. Second is the primordial time "at the beginning of times," the mythical time of Umboh, who is not eternal, yet not historical. This is when creation would have taken place. And finally there is the "present" or contingent time in which the Badjaos live.

Situated at the "beginning of times" and developed as a dialogue between the great Badjao spirits, the story assumes the significance of a myth. Badjao commentators point to the meaning of this myth. "If the people had chosen to die like the moon, the same persons would always exist in the world, dying and returning like the moon that dies and is reborn in continuity but always remains the same. There would be no more room for other persons. The people opted for the second choice to give others the chance to come into the world. Like the trees, the people leave in the end. But after them, other persons will come. And thus from generation to generation many will be able to enjoy life."

One should not give too much weight to the idea that choices were offered by Tuhan and made by men. At most, this story could suggest the idea that men themselves are ultimately responsible for their misfortunes. Were this to be the principal theme, egoism would surely have compelled men to choose dying "like the moon." Rather than a search for the origins, the myth is a reflection on what actually happens when humans live and die. The myth is used to explain the mystery of the human condition and eventually to give it meaning.

Human existence is not cyclical. Man does not die like the moon. There is no rebirth and no return. Not even the possibility of reincarnation is foreseen. With death, the individual's mundane existence is terminated, just as in the case of the tree whose individual existence ends forever with death. Observations of this sort seem rather negative and pessimistic. These observations, however, constitute only a part of the Badjao philosophical discourse.

Contrary to what is sometimes suggested, the tree in the myth does not celebrate primarily the mystery of fertility, the capacity to transmit life, or the capacity to communicate something of oneself to the shoots that can grow from the original stump. If one were to suggest that something of the original tree survives in its shoots, this would indicate that something similar happens for the human race. At the end of life, it may be conjectured, the people leave something of themselves which remains in their children. The man dies; but just as for the tree, for man death does not mean simply the end of everything. From an immanentist view, this idea of "genealogical continuity" suggests hope and salvation.

But the Badjaos' philosophical reflection does not dwell on this kind of observation. What is ultimately appreciated in the myth is that "many persons can enjoy life." In this event then, no matter how fascinating it could be, the Badjaos do not seek any soteriology. This must be sought elsewhere, in what could be described as "the other life."

This other life is not a new life. The Badjaos do not speak of resurrection. Life after death is rather a prolongation of the present life. With death, in fact, life is not taken away, but transformed. This transformation develops through two passages which we can describe respectively as horizontal and vertical. The horizontal passage takes place at the moment of death, when a person passes from the world of the visible to the world of the invisible, the world of the spirits. In this world, the vertical second passage occurs when a person rises from the simple order of spirits of the dead to the world of the ancestors. This is the true salvific passage. It entails an initiation.

This other life does not even presuppose a transcendent world. The way the Badjaos speak of their dead gives the impression that the dead are still in their midst. Visible and invisible beings live together, side by side, in a world that, at least on the lowest level, does not know any real break in continuity. The dead continue to be part of the Badjao extended family, with the ancestors at the head and below, in descending order, the minor spirits and the living beings.

By dying, therefore, a person does not leave the Badjao world. In a certain sense, he only exits from the stage in or-

der to continue his activities from behind the scenes. On stage, in the limited space of the human setting, those who have the good fortune to be called to "enjoy life" succeed one another. Their number is potentially limitless because even though space is limited, humans die like the trees and do not return. In the Badjao myth, a positive truth is proclaimed.

Seen in this way, the Badjao world appears frozen in time, in a permanent present. To exist, there is no need of a circular continuity, like that described by lunar life. There is no need even of a linear continuity, which extends and is projected into the future, be it degenerative or developmental.

Time does not find a real extension in the future, not even in the vision of a genealogical succession. The children constituting a lineage are not seen as existing in a future temporal extension, but in a present that is not yet realized. In the myth, the metaphor of the tree emphasizes not the theme of continuity in time, but rather the abundance of people who can eventually enjoy life.

The past is past, and as such has fallen into nothingness. Badjaos do not have a history. They have personal histories but, in general, they do not like remembering. They have a cult of their dead, but they do not seek them in the past. These are ancestors. They are spirits that live and populate the Badjao world in the present. With and above them, one finds the mythical ancestor, Umboh. With him, the metahistorical time of origins also enters the Badjao world, whose potential is not limited to the past, in a far-off beginning of history, but is recognized as near and accessible.

The real exists in the present, so that only the present is ultimately real. The living Badjaos, with their spirits, live and move in the present. Time passes by, without calling attention to itself.

Sacred Time

Present time is experienced in the everyday. Here the Badjao encounters the suffering of living, with the tragedies that often affect him or her personally. Everyday life is a continuous

revelation about the precariousness and contingency of human existence. But in the everyday, the Badjao can encounter also that which is the quintessence of life: the *atahah kalluman* or "long life," that fundamental vital force which animates and sustains the whole universe.

The time of the everyday is cyclical, made up of two phases: the night and the day. By night, human life loses intensity. Social mingling is reduced and most daily activities are suspended. Man withdraws into his privacy and rests. This reduced, almost larvalike mode of existing, combined with the darkness of the night, becomes the symbol of the unreal, of all that can be negative: of evil and of death. By day, things become visible and consistent anew. Light returns, and with the light, life resurrects. The world returns to life, human mingling is reconstituted, and people restart their activity. It is an intense way of existing, that reveals the nature of real and living things. It is an epiphany of life.

In this fundamental division between night and day, Badjao religiosity finds the essential worth of the everyday and the first indications about the way of encountering the sacred powers that govern life. In the darkness of the night, the realities without form or substance find a dwelling place: shadows, spirits, the dead. It is a dangerous time, so one stays home or risks having unpleasant encounters. But only at night can certain rites be performed. These are the minor rites. Some are related to the cult of the dead. After all, it is in the dark that one can encounter these spirits! Other nocturnal rites are meant to exorcise dangers like the evil eye or spells. There is the conviction that wickedness takes shape and therefore becomes more easily accessible at night.

The major rites take place during the day. Their main goal is that of helping life: to liberate life as much as possible from the weakness of contingency, to sustain it, develop it, and shape it into the ideal. The day is the time of the living. It is the time of life. It is therefore the most favorable moment for harnessing cosmic vitality that in the light of day finds a symbolic expression and takes shape.

The day takes form and finds consistency under the sun—the star of life. But the Badjao sees the sun as the star of life

not so much because it reheats the earth with its rays and warms the young seedlings, the grass, and the plants, helping them to grow; for about all this the Badjao is only ill-informed. The sun appears to the Badjao as the star of life from the Badjao's symbolic reading of its way of living. The sun, first of all, generates the days. With its coming and presence, it separates the days from the darkness of the night and keeps them in existence until the evening, when it temporarily goes away and leaves the scene of this world. Where the day is seen as the time of life, the sun is perceived as the star that brings life.

Primarily however, the sun is recognized as the star of life because the Badjao sees in it the true life, that which never knows sunset. Unlike the moon which periodically dies, the sun never dies. Without undergoing the modalities of death, it enters each night and crosses with impunity the reign of darkness and of death, only to reappear anew the day after, eternally alive and the same in itself. The sun is not a divinity. It is a created reality. But it shows superhuman dimensions that the moon does not know. The nobility and the splendor of the sun are evoked in its yellow color, a color that, among the Badjaos, readily gives it religious connotations.¹

During the day, not all moments are equal. Some are particularly favorable. These are the intense moments in which the sacred precipitates almost spontaneously and more abundantly. These therefore represent the best time, the most appropriate to encounter the cosmic vitality at its maximum potentiality. For the Badjao, two moments stand out in particular. These are the strong times of the morning and midday.

The morning is the beginning. A new day begins, and with it a new flowering of life. It evokes the time of the beginnings and of creation. All rites that are directly or indirectly initiatory find their specific place in this context. In this cosmic setting, the first actor is the rising sun: the star of life. Among the various rites of the morning, some explicitly seek the direction of the rising sun.

The other great moment is midday—the moment when the day is at its fullness. In this moment, the central part of the

two most important Badjao rites is developed: There is the *pag-umboh*, first of all, which brings among men Umboh, the mythical ancestor and the great mediator who takes care of life. Then there is marriage, a rite for a union which will constitute in society a new source of life. Even here, the sun occupies a primary role. While at the center of the sky, at the zenith, it proclaims its lordship, expressing its maximum power and vitality.

Night and day, morning and midday in themselves are not sacred times, although their symbolic value is important. They are used to define and eventually find the sacred time, which does not always appear with the same intensity. In order for a rite to harness the "fullness of time" and express its maximum efficacy, the "right" time is not enough. It has to take place in a symbolically "favorable" moment. This concept of fullness can vary considerably. It depends on the sensibility and scruples of the subject concerned, on the seriousness of the situation to which the rite is a response, on the symbolic language which, each time, is considered relevant, and so on. In practice, when the time is not favorable—that is, full—a rite can be postponed. Sometimes even a rite that has already begun can be suspended.

All these concerns, while they emphasize the importance of the favorable time, reveal indirectly the absolute relativity of time destined to remain profane. Profane time has no value. One can observe first of all the ease with which the rites can be postponed. Postponing a sacred bath may not really be expensive, but most certainly not so a marriage. Yet marriages are postponed, and sometimes not only once. But for the Badjaos, few things are needed. To harness the perfect fullness of the times is one of these. All the rest can wait.

The relative unimportance of profane time can also be seen in the way in which a rite is performed. What matters is to do it as it should be done. Losing or wasting time in the rite is one way of making it perfect. There is no hurry. It were as though the life of the concerned persons were at a dead end. There is nothing above or outside the rite that may have importance. There is nothing that may distract. One does not

worry about what others may do. There is no worry about the future. A Badjao in prayer has all the time of this world at his disposal.

Badjaos are poor. They have few personal possessions—the necessary minimum. They are always ready to leave. For their life they know they can rely on the sea. To look for direction they have the islands by day and, by night they have the stars. Their compass—as they say—is in the sky. In the sky they find the sun, the star that tells them about the long life and how to look for it. Under its guidance and in its company they celebrate and perform their most important rites. With these rites they are immersed in sacred time—wherever they might find themselves. All the rest is relative. Sacred time is the only time that really matters, the only metaphysically real time, the time in which man finds himself in contact with the absolute.

Part One

The Sacred

2

The Absolute

THE BADJAOS' RELIGIOUS BELIEFS speak of a real contact, here on earth, between the religious person and the sacred powers that govern the life of humankind and the life of the universe. There is one exception: Tuhan, the god of the sky. And nothing more. They do not have a sacred history to narrate. Nor do they have a doctrine to proclaim.

These sacred powers do not appear as impersonal entities. They are spirits. They are personalized agents with whom the Badjao religious man entertains a relation as of person to person.

The beliefs about the various spirits and their possible relationships vary among the different *kampung* (all persons among whom there is some kin relationship, whether traceable or not) and, within the same *kampung*, from person to person. They even vary according to the existential situations in which the person finds himself and the way in which these are interpreted. From the theoretical point of view, therefore, one will be dealing with several inconsistencies and much imprecision. All this does not bother the Badjaos. In fact they are not concerned so much with formulating or precisely describing the personality and the nature of the various spirits. Their concerns are of a practical order. They are concerned most of all about identifying from time to time the spirit responsible for a certain situation and finding out in this way the proper rite or appropriate prayer.

Eventually though, some points of reference and common beliefs can be easily traced. They describe what could be called a Badjao pneumatology. The cultic praxis presupposes it. The Badjao knows it.

There is a common characteristic that all the spirits show. They are essentially powers. More precisely, they are sacred powers. That is, they are endowed with a power that the human creature does not possess—or at least the human creature does not possess of its own. At times, in fact in particular circumstances and by special concession, even the human creature can have this power “for use.”

This sacred power is not found in the same manner, indiscriminately, within all the various spirits. Each spirit possesses it according to its status and role. In a way it can be said that the sacred power may vary—not only in intensity, but even in its essence. These variations can be placed between two extremes: On the one hand, there is the really sacred power. To describe it the Badjaos use the word *barakat*. It is a super-human power, and therefore unlimited. It is clearly differentiated from the power, on the other hand, that the Badjaos describe with the word *kawasa*. This latter connotes, broadly speaking, what can be called the nonsacred power, like the strength of a person, or the energy of an electric current.

These variations in the sacred power can be visualized in a continuum from the superior spirits, through the various minor spirits, till it reaches, at its lowest level, human creatures. This description must be taken as an image of convenience. With the Badjaos, the various levels of sacred power are not recognized as measures of different degrees of intensity, but through the different spirits. In fact, the various spirits are primarily powers. The Badjao religious man experiences and recognizes them as “sacred powers.”

ABSOLUTE SPIRITS

The Badjao equivalent of *spirit* is a generic term. Under this name a multitude of different agents are indiscriminately collected. The various spirits, in fact, are not distinguished

only through the degree of power at their disposal. There are various kinds of spirits. Some are ephemeral entities. Others are permanent realities. Among the latter, some are placed beyond whatever is contingent. They are the spirits that, for convenience, are called here: absolute spirits.

Tuhan

Tuhan is an old Malay word meaning "Lord." It is used even today among several Southeast Asian peoples, tribal as well as modern. It describes the supreme being. Thus also with the Badjaos. In their popular descriptions, he is presented as a great old man, with a white beard and white clothes. Badjaos themselves do not give much importance to such descriptions. "Tuhan," they say, "does not really resemble human beings." These images have to be read symbolically. Here they find their value.

One can find in Badjao culture, above all, suggestions that underline Tuhan's antiquity. In his age, one can find suggestions that highlight his majesty. Indirectly he is placed at the origin of things. In particular, old age describes the eternity of Tuhan. Tuhan's existence is unquestioned, taken for granted, and recognized by all the Badjaos. Tuhan exists. He exists by himself and has always existed. Even the sky, his dwelling place, in its serene immutability, speaks of Tuhan's eternity.

The white of his clothes evokes the splendor of celestial radiance. Tuhan dwells in the sky. The sky describes first of all "the beyond," far above and extending without limits. In the sky, the world of realities which do not know the weight and limitations of matter is symbolically expressed. It is the space inaccessible to man. It is the world of the spirits. And among all spirits, Tuhan is the spirit par excellence. His dwelling in the sky marks his radical transcendence. Tuhan and only Tuhan is wholly other.

In its immensity, the sky speaks of realities with no limits. Those who live there do not experience human limitations. Spirits enjoy a freedom and a boundless flexibility that human creatures do not have. They can, for example, be easily present everywhere. Sometimes one can even speak of a

certain ubiquity. Tuhan, in particular, "is like the wind. He is there in heaven and there in the sea, he is here with us and there in the forest. Tuhan is everywhere."

Tuhan can come to everything, and everything is in his power. He can do anything, and nothing is impossible for him. He is omnipotent. He owns and is the origin of all power. No power can stand up to his omnipotence. Tuhan is stronger than the *saitan*. He is their Lord. He has power over the Umboh, his first creature. The power of the *djin* (spirit-bearer) or the *panday* (indigenous midwife) or the imam (religious leader) is a gift of Tuhan. All power comes from Tuhan.

Being omnipotent he is expected to be active. However, he is never governed by necessity. In Tuhan there are no known laws that regulate his divine nature. His is a divine free will. He acts when he wants and as he wants. The results of his initiatives could be recognizable, but their reasons will always remain inscrutable. For instance, a teenager was about to venture on a long journey. To the people who advised against it, her father answered, "If Tuhan wants my daughter to die, she will die. If he wants her to return, she will return." Tuhan's inscrutability can at times be used to explain human limitations. When a child is born abnormal, the explanation is often simply that Tuhan wanted it "that way."

The Badjao usually does not ask questions about the origin of the world. When these are asked, the Badjao easily deduces a concept of a creator from what is affirmed about the lordship and omnipotence of Tuhan. With the exception of the *saitan* all that are visible and not visible, like the spirits, have been created by Tuhan.

But more than in a temporal sense, the Badjaos perceive the attribute of "creator" from an existential perspective. Tuhan is the spirit that gives life and can eventually defend it from the attacks of evil. It is most of all in this sense that Tuhan is relevant to the Badjaos. Even if Umboh may be the one who in practice takes care of life, the lord of life always remains Tuhan.

Though aloof in his existence, Tuhan sees everything and keeps an eye on what happens among men. He sees human

evil and does not hide his dislike for it. He punishes the one who does evil. The other spirits strike usually to remind whoever has forgotten that they exist and that they intend to be treated in a proper manner. Oftentimes they strike out of pure whim. Tuhan, however, simply punishes the one who behaves in an evil way. He is the ultimate sanction for all ethical behavior.

The fact that the spirits of the dead are distinguished between good spirits and bad spirits does not necessarily imply a connotation of an ethical nature. Their condition depends mainly on the circumstances that caused death or the way in which the funeral was done. Even the beliefs about *surgah* and *narkah* do not necessarily imply a truly eschatological awareness. Each statement about the justice of Tuhan and its application in the present life, and for some even in the future life, is born more out of the theoretical necessity to preserve Tuhan as the absolute ideal, rather than out of evidence of an empirical order.

In daily life, when confronted with the problem of evil, one avoids calling Tuhan to fault. His transcendence keeps him remote from any possible responsibility in this sense. Other spirits are seen as the source of the various evils that trouble human life or bring about death. They are nearer. Pain is not attributed to a punitive intervention by Tuhan. When in his inscrutability he is invoked, this is done above all in order to give meaning and make the pain more acceptable. "Tuhan," the Badjaos say, "does not do evil. Tuhan is good." When he occasionally intervenes in human affairs, he generally does it to help.

The Saitan

The saitan are the other form of absolute spirit, though found at a level lower than Tuhan. What mostly distinguishes them from Tuhan is the fact that, while the latter dwells in the sky, the saitan dwell on the earth. They are, in fact, sacred powers that manifest themselves even physically through certain realities particularly significant for the Badjaos, like rocks or trees.

The name *saitan* is not a Badjao word. It could be of Islamic derivation. In the Koran itself there is a being called Saytan, a rebel spirit who opposes Allah and seeks to mislead man. In local usage, this term could imply a negative judgment on the part of the strictly monotheistic Islamized people, against the cult that the Badjaos render to these spirits. Despite the use of the name, the Badjaos surely do not share the Islamic theology. Indifferent to possible negative judgments, the Badjaos retain it. Perhaps they find it somehow expresses that "demonic" nature they experience in the sacred rocks and trees. At any rate, regarding names, the Badjaos are not fond of the subtle.

The presence of a *saitan* is recognized as the irruption of an ontologically supranatural entity into a reality of the natural world. This entrance into the natural world is described as "finding a home," "taking up residence," and so on, all images suggesting the idea of a true "incarnation." The discovery of the presence of a *saitan* is not the fruit of human reflection, but the sudden knowledge imposed on man through a religious experience.

The *saitan's* presence in the world is permanent and unconditional. Man cannot remove a *saitan*. It is not in his power. Different from other spirits that move on earth, the seats of the various *saitan* can therefore be photographed. The use of a flash does not disturb the religious sensibility of the Badjaos. There is no danger that the gadgets of modern technology can in any way damage or corrupt that sacred presence.

Even with their fundamental similarity to the absolute spirit that dwells in the sky, the *saitan* are different from Tuhan and are "second" to him. This rather vague concept of being second implies, among other things, a kind of minor perfection. Differing from Tuhan, who *possesses* barakat and has been described as benevolently omnipotent, the *saitan* "are barakat." They evoke a wild creativity. They appear as uncontrollable and unpredictable forces, not domesticated. In a sense, they are lawless and they often behave in a whimsical way. The *saitan* there-

fore betray a certain ambiguity in the use of their power. Their erratic behavior gives them the image of dangerous beings.

Often, popular belief describes them as night-wandering spirits. Usually "they take up a home at night." They prefer to move around in the dark, like the spirits of the dead, which move almost exclusively in the dark. All this does not testify in their favor. The benevolent spirits move during the day. At night only the spirits who do evil are active. In fact, some say that the *saitan* confine themselves to "carrying" the bad spirits. But that by mere association, *saitan* cannot help becoming, as it were, even more truly "second class" spirits.

Contrary to what the name might suggest, the *saitan* does not correspond to the devil of certain great religious traditions. Neither can it be considered a sort of power opposed to *Tuhan*. The *Badjaos* do not seem to hold to a dualism of the good personified in *Tuhan* against the forces of evil represented by the *saitan*. *Tuhan* and *saitan* ultimately have the same nature. They have the same *barakat*.

However, whereas *Tuhan* is composed and reasonable in the use of his power and always figures as a benevolent divinity, the *saitan* are unpredictable and appear capable of doing evil. Though they are not the incarnation of evil, they end up appearing as evil. For this reason they are often described as "bad spirits."

On earth, besides the *saitan*, one can encounter several other spirits. Among these, *Umboh* has a place of his own. All the others can be grouped under the common name *sumangat*. A *saitan* is not, and therefore must not be confused with, a *sumangat*. For a *Badjao*, the distinction is clear. For a non-*Badjao*, the matter is not always that simple.

Sumangat are the intrinsic spirits of material reality that may reveal themselves at significant moments. A piece of cloth, for example, bought to be given away as a gift, or a coconut chosen for use in a ritual, in the very act of acquisition reveals the presence of a spirit or *sumangat*. They are respectively the *sumangat* of the cloth and the *sumangat* of the coconut. A *saitan* that dwells in a certain rock or in a

certain tree is not to be confused with the sumangat of the rock or the sumangat of the tree.

All the spirits the Badjaos describe as sumangat are created spirits. Saitan, like Tuhan, are the sacred powers that have "always existed." They are therefore "eternal." Aside from them, no other spirit can claim a similar form of existence. Not even Umboh.

Sumangat are creatures, as the realities in which they dwell. They are contingent entities, even while their destiny can be different from the destiny of the material realities, or of the persons, for whom they are spirits. On the other hand, a saitan, even when it makes itself present in a created reality, continues to remain an entity of a different order. The contingency of its dwelling place does not condition its mode of being. A saitan is an absolute sacred reality.

SACRED PLACES

A saitan sacralizes not only the rock or the tree in which it resides, but sacralizes also the surrounding space. As a consequence, it can be designated as the saitan of a given place. Even in this case, the saitan of a certain place is not to be confused with the possible spirit of that geographical area. This latter is only a sumangat.⁵

Rocks

The simplest and most original of the sacred forms in which saitan can take residence are rocks. These can be any size or shape and located almost anywhere. It could be a modest stone, reached only with difficulty in the thick of the forest; or an immense boulder of obscure origin that stands solitary in the silence of an open field.

But oftentimes, sacred rocks are found in the sea: some reef, among the many that mark the coasts of the various islands of the archipelago of Tawi-Tawi; or some huge crag like the large volcanic slab that rises primordially in the

middle of the sea off Tongsina, between Bongao and Bato Bato. These rocks can appear in a common context, like the small stone that some time ago was found on the coast of Luuk Bangka—an ordinary rock on a rocky shore. At other times, they can be found in a majestic and impressive scenario, like the two rocks amid whirling waters that can be found off the island of Bilatan.

Sacred rocks often appear in association with plants. These can be small shrubs that grow out from a gorge or around the rock itself. They can also be trees that climb the sacred rock with their huge roots full of nodes, or grow in its vicinity. In these cases, the religious sensibility and the cult tend to focus on the plant, more than on the rock, to the extent that the plant can become the seat of the saitan.⁶

Even when attention is focused on the rock, the shrub remains at the center of the cultic activity. In invoking the saitan of the rock, the Badjao faces the shrub and addresses it. The rice cakes and the other offerings are placed nearby or at the foot of the shrub. The banners are attached to its branches.

It is not rare, however, to find sacred dwelling places even in rocks which are stark and bare. One has only to look at the reefs along the coasts, or off the shore in the sea. The symbolic message of these rocks assumes a particular nuance in the Badjao cosmology, where the world, as we have seen, appears as an immense sea—a reality essentially fluid, dotted with islands that fix some points of reference in a space otherwise without direction. From this sea they rise, solid and immovable, bare and essential, always and forever the same. They can be dangerous if the waters are unfamiliar, or a refuge when the wind suddenly rises and the sea swells.

In the religious intuition, these elemental seats suggest powerful, permanent forces that challenge the mutability of living things and the wearing away of time. These rocks, and all stones found within the scenario of a religious experience, naturally become the house of that sacred power which, in the course of contingent life, is the only absolute that lasts, resists time, and can give meaning to existence.

Trees

The other seat favored as dwelling place by the *saitan* is the tree. These can also vary in size and form. They can be small, barren shrubs. Often they are trees with large trunks, tall and majestic. They can be found almost everywhere, even in the interior of the various islands. They can grow deep in the thick of the forest, just as they can rise isolated in some arid and solitary corner. More frequently they are found among the mangroves along the coast or within the reefs.

One favorite species is the *nunuk*, the banyan tree (*Ficus bengalensis*). A tree with parasitic tendencies, it often digs its roots into another more solid plant, encloses it and feeds on it until the other suffocates. When it does not find another tree for support, it spreads a network of huge distorted roots on the surface of the ground and sends down a dense rain of other roots from its trunk and branches.

What most impresses the Badjao in the tree—and therefore that which in the sacred tree will be celebrated—is its exuberance of life. From the tree, leaves can be gathered or branches removed or parts of the bark peeled, without its vitality being damaged. A branch can wither without making the plant suffer. A stock can conserve its vitality even when one of its plants should die. The forest remains always green even if one of its trees should fall.

This same vitality is found in the seeds, the grass, and the plants that constitute the world of vegetation. In this context, the tree emerges as a sign and symbol of the whole. The tree summarizes and describes the world of vegetation, and in its exuberance the abundant vitality of that world is celebrated.

The Badjao diet is almost exclusively made up of fish, at times accompanied by a bit of cassava. The Badjaos do not make much use of food plants, herbs, and fruits, though these are not lacking. Still, it is mostly in these that vitalistic elements are recognized. A particular place is given to rice which, though rarely used, represents the food par excellence. In the rites it is never absent.

In contrast to the limited use of food plants, healing herbs are liberally used. Badjao medicine is based almost exclusively

on roots, woods, barks, leaves, flowers, berries, but above all herbs. Various types of medication are extracted from these, or herbal teas are used for various types of fever. Though these herbs are sometimes effective, from the point of view of modern medicine Badjao medicine leaves a lot to be desired.

The logic that sustains this indigenous medicine is to be sought more in the symbolic realm than in the biological. Certain roots, flowers, and leaves are used because they are shaped in a certain way, or because the medicinal plant is found in a special place. Relevant above all is their meaning. Ultimately these substances are recognized as medicinal because they come from the world of vegetation. They come from "the tree," the source of the greatest vitality. In medicinal herbs, the Badjaos ultimately seek to harness the vitality or "vital power" which is found in that herb. They seek to nourish themselves and thus to participate in the unlimited vitality of "the tree," that in continuity renews and regenerates itself.

The tree can regenerate itself and generate because it has received in itself that energy which is the only force that can call to life and sustain every living being. This vitality is often symbolized in the forest. There is no tree, in fact, that stands alone. Each tree has its own history. In this history there are other trees. The forest is the living metaphor that narrates the history of each tree. With a bolder image still, arboreal vitality is sometimes summed up in the color green. The forest is frequently called "the green." This is the source of the religious value of the color green.

The tree that suggests a philosophical reflection becomes a revelation on the mystery of life. Moreover, since any Badjao philosophical reflection is developed on a religious background, the tree can also generate a religious experience and become a true hierophany. In this case, the tree becomes a sacred tree; the dwelling place of a saitan.

Starting from these initial intuitions, the tree can provide further valuable inferences. As seen also in the mythical dialogue on life, the tree is the first metaphor of the mystery of human life. In the opposite direction, it may suggest a series of further reflections on the mystery of the sacred.

On the island of Bongao, a particular nunuk is designated as the seat of a "male and female" saitan. Two trunks grow from the same stock. The taller, larger one, and therefore "more robust," reveals the male characteristic. The other, smaller, slimmer, and therefore "weaker," reveals the female characteristic.⁷ Using similar symbolic readings, some plants can be designated as seats of "more masculine" saitan, while others are seen as "more feminine."

Most sacred plants and trees do not suggest these readings. The majority are simply sacred trees. According to the Badjaos, a saitan is neither male nor female. They are not concerned about the gender of a saitan. For the Badjaos it is enough to state that the saitan are not like human beings. They are superior to humankind.

Implicit in these statements is the conviction that the saitan unite in themselves, to a suprahuman degree, both the masculine and the feminine potentials. When a tree reveals a character like masculinity, this is never perceived as a limitation that excludes femininity. It is seen rather as the dominant character of a whole, where both masculinity and femininity are present, to a suprahuman degree.

More than the polarization of the sexes, the sexual connotations of the various saitan celebrate the exuberance of life, which in the final analysis is the exuberance of the vitality of the absolute being. In the order of human realities, sexuality is part of the discourse on life. So also in the order of the sacred described by these saitan, the theme of sexuality emerges because in this particular revelation the experience of the mystery and miracle of life is celebrated.

The tree therefore comes forward as a metaphor in continuous movement between the natural and the supernatural. While suggesting reflections on the forms of human existence, from here it evokes images allowing an exploration into the mystery of the absolute, the origin of life. From the sacred realm then, religious intuitions are redirected back toward earthly phenomena, showing in them the presence of the sacred.

In all this, the leitmotif is always life. In the life of the tree, Badjaos find one of the richest discourses on the being and personality of the absolute spirit. They further find an

understanding of life itself, both in its existential and religious dimensions. Life is a miracle, a reality that man ultimately does not control. It is the primary attribute of divinity and the most important gift the divine can bestow. The sacred tree, symbol and seat of divine vitality in the world, is none other than the tree of life.

Other Seats

The rock and the tree are clearly the saitan's most important dwelling places. With much less rigor, the people also speak of a saitan of the sea and a saitan of the wind. Rather than true sacred powers, these saitan seem to be extrapolations from the original sacred forms (rock and tree) that reduce the saitan to minor spirits (*sumangat*).

Perhaps some credibility can be given to the saitan of the sea. The Badjaos also call him a "*salim*," commonly used to designate the powerful spirits of persons who were extraordinary individuals in terms of strength or holiness. It must not be forgotten that the most powerful saitan, both of the rocks or of the trees, are found along the coast, near the sea. This cannot be reduced to the fact that the sea is primarily the place where the Badjaos live and move. Rather, it demonstrates that water has a significant role in Badjao religious symbolism.

One of the most remarkable rites, associated with matrimonial practice, takes place precisely at sea, with reference to a powerful *salim* who dwells at the bottom. In an incestuous marriage, after the nuptial rites, the couple, the imam, and the close relatives go offshore and make an offering that they drop into the sea. In comparison with other offerings, this is rather conspicuous. Even objects of gold are included.

In line with these beliefs, when someone anywhere on the sea has some religious experience, he or she makes promises and offerings to the *salim* of that spot. There are no banners, but rather rice cakes and various objects are dropped as offerings to fall to the bottom of the sea. That place at the sea bottom becomes sacred; and every time that one nears it, one offers a thought and asks for permission to pass. The experience, however, tends to remain isolated in time and

space. Without points of reference to help recognize the place, this remains significant only for the individual. It does not become a collective experience that lasts in time. Perhaps because of this, the saitan of the sea, if they do exist, are destined to have little success.

The saitan of the wind seems the least significant of the saitan. The saitan of the wind not only falls short of the status of being the center of a cult, but the very nature of the wind itself also fails to provide the concreteness that forms the structure of the sacred powers incarnated. Even so, the idea of a saitan of this kind is not to be completely discarded. The image of the wind is frequently used to describe the nature of the minor spirits. Its nature underlines the spirituality and ubiquity of the spirits.

But it underlines most of all the concept of power. The wind is not seen, but its presence is recognized by its strength. When it is unleashed, it agitates the sea and endangers the lives of the people living on the sea. When it blows stronger than usual, it generally hinders fishing. When it is gentle, the boats capture its power in their sails. The wind is primarily force.

Even when it is not perceived as a sacred dwelling place, it can help in the understanding of the nature of the spirits and evoke the idea of sacred forces. In the metaphor of the wind, the blowing used in the rites becomes significant. With a blowing of air, the arm where the power of a person resides gets strengthened. Blowing along a lock of hair, power is communicated to a woman in the initiation baths. And at birth, as soon as a creature comes to light, the panday blows on its mouth to give it the power and the spirit of life.

Divine Power and Human Weakness

With the saitan, the absolute enters the life and the world of the Badjao in a new way. He finds himself in a relationship with the sacred that is not only spiritual but also physical. Its presence in concrete realities such as sacred rocks or trees places the Badjao directly or indirectly in a situation of continuous religious tension.

This relation with the saitan is conceptualized and defined primarily in terms of "distance." One approaches them only to ask for help. Otherwise, as much as possible, one tries to stay away from them. When unwillingly one has to pass by or work in the vicinity of a saitan, one takes pains "to ask permission." To behave differently may arouse the anger of the saitan.

In the concept of distance, the idea of physical distance ought not to be completely excluded. In fact, when dealing with a sick person, one asks whether by chance that person was near the seat of a saitan, and even "how near." This idea of distance, however, is not conceived purely in measurable terms. One moves in the vicinity of a saitan when one stands in the ambit of space where the saitan's seat becomes relevant. This is either because from where one stands the saitan's seat is visible, or because even though not visible, there exists a direct line with no big obstacles in between.

Physical proximity, however, is not enough to explain the activity of a saitan. Some persons struck by a saitan may have passed many other times in the same area, perhaps even nearer to the seat of that saitan, without suffering injury. In other cases, one person may be fatally injured while others are able to pass much nearer with impunity. Is it possible then to speak of a secure distance, understood only in spatial terms?

The concept of distance understood in the sense just mentioned has to be integrated with the concept of knowledge a person may have of being in the "presence" of a saitan. In this sense, the usual "asking for permission" implies a recognition and an act of respect on the part of man towards the saitan.

Seats of the saitan can be easily found around any Badjao village. They are therefore places that are frequented, where children easily linger to play. The sacred rocks can readily become the point of reference for their games. This is especially true of the sacred trees. Children climb them or hide in them, and if these trees are bearing fruit, they pick them freely. No one worries about them, not even their parents. The Badjaos hold that for the children there is no danger because they are too young to understand how their behavior

might offend the saitan. Since they are not responsible, *the* saitan would not harm them.

Still, when a child gets hurt while playing in the vicinity of a saitan or, after a day spent in the surroundings, goes home in the evening with a fever, one possible explanation is that the child could have irritated the local saitan. "While they are playing, the children make noise, and the saitan do not like noises."

Similarly, an adult may also be struck for not having asked the required permission of a saitan whose seat is not yet known. This can happen when a saitan has taken residence only recently, and even where the adult concerned is hardly to blame.

These last cases clearly show that man is utterly helpless before a saitan. There are practically no means of defense. Not even "asking permission" can prevent the wrath of a saitan. In general, the idea of asking permission, more than an ethical suggestion guiding daily behavior, appears as a theory that explains a posteriori the origin of a sickness. In daily practice, no one knows how many Badjaos actually ask for permission.

Before a saitan, man is defenseless because in the saitan is revealed the absolute. In the idea of distance, therefore, not merely the idea of physical or conceptual distance is expressed. Expressed in it is primarily the radical distance between man and the absolute. Man is nothing. The saitan is everything. Here, "asking permission" no longer connotes a simple act of human respect, such as that shown by a young person to an elder, or any person to a superior. The request for permission before a saitan is the celebration of a rite in which man professes his reverence before the absolute.

However, this cultic act must not be seen as an antidote against the wrath of the saitan. This wrath cannot be reduced to a mere act of irritation caused by a momentary act of impoliteness. The wrath of a saitan is an immense wrath. As the Badjaos put it, "It can kill." What man experiences is only a pale version of its limitless force. It can strike any person, at any distance. It is a divine wrath and therefore beyond comprehension. When it strikes, the Badjao does not discuss. The Badjao simply submits.

In the saitan the sacred becomes near and enters into the life of the Badjaos. They are disturbing presences, in a sense

oppressive. They do not allow indifference. They require continuous attention. At this level the Badjao fully experiences the ambiguity of the sacred power. The saitan's erratic behavior is nothing but a revelation of this ambiguity. Consequently, their nearness always brings uncasiness. The religious person never knows how best to behave. He or she lives in fear of irritating them.

Normally, one keeps one's distance from them, at least far enough away to be free from thoughts of their presence and so be able to dedicate oneself serenely to daily life. "We go near a saitan," the Badjaos say, only when we intend to ask for his help. Otherwise, as much as possible we keep them at a distance."

But in the end they are always "present" and the religious person must get used to living with them. One has to learn to treat them appropriately so that these forces will not strike with their destructive anger, but will work for one's benefit.

CULTIC EXPRESSIONS

The Badjaos turn to the saitan for various reasons. One usually invokes them when threatened or injured by their wrath. It can be a sickness, or failure to catch fish. At times one can ask for their help before embarking on a risky venture as a precautionary measure. The cult of Tuhan, on the other hand, is radically different. Tuhan "dwells in the sky," unreachable. Man cannot take a single step toward him, hence the absence of specific rites concerning him.

To the Saitan

The most elementary cultic act is the request for permission. It can be a simple thought, or a formal visit with offerings at the seat of a saitan. This is the most common cultic form when one's lack of respect could bring on serious harm due to the saitan's wrath.

Usually, the gifts brought to the seats of the saitan consist of three banners and some rice cakes. The banners are pieces

of cloth, each attached to a staff. The measurements and the shapes can vary. The colors though are almost always the same: white, green, and yellow. The preference for these colors seems to stem from the desire to evoke certain sacred realities: white for the splendor of Tuhan, green for the vitality of the tree, and yellow for the image of the sun. As regards the second offering, the rice is cooked, frequently colored yellow, and formed in the shape of a cake about the size of a fist.

Badjaos do not like going alone to visit the seats of the saitan. They go in small processions. As they near the seat, the leader introduces himself to the saitan with the common local greeting, "Assalamu alaikum." Once at the seat, he kneels and with a bowl of smoking incense recites prayers and various invocations. The other persons accompany with personal comments or invocations.

The liturgical discourse has a logical structure. It opens with the reasons for the visit. Then, excuses are presented for the behavior that could have caused the irritation of the saitan. These excuses are accompanied by a series of prayers to persuade the saitan to forgive. The sequence ends by reminding him how they have just done their duty. The saitan should now do his part.

The discourse is different from daily language. The tone of the voice is louder, somewhat like talking to an old person who is rather deaf. It consists mainly of ejaculatory prayers in archaic Arabic-like language, and at times Christian prayers.

During the prayer the various offerings are presented. Besides the banners and the rice cakes, other cultic expressions are sometimes added. For example, candles can be lighted or, while the leader prays and presents the offerings, others go around the sacred rock or tree, sprinkling perfume or talcum powder.

Honoring Tuhan

The lack of specific rites concerning Tuhan is explained and justified by the difficulty of locating him. "Even if one wants to do so," a Badjao told me "where can one offer him

the rice cakes or the banners?" Man cannot walk towards the sky. He can only turn his eyes in that direction. He can only turn to Tuhan through thought and prayer.

Tuhan is frequently invoked in formal prayers, and informal invocations. These prayers are collectively known as *pag-duwa-a atahah kalluman*, or prayer for long life. As the name suggests, life and its well-being are the main concern. Indirectly, the practice of this prayer is a recognition of the lordship which Tuhan boasts over life.

These prayers can be made separately, like private prayers. But almost always they are found as additional invocations in the prayers and rites addressed to other spirits. Because "Tuhan is everywhere," he can be addressed in any place or circumstance.

In reality, one has the impression that Tuhan, though claiming all the supreme attributes, does not come forward as an intimate divinity. He remains in the background of the Badjao religious scenery, always present but in the manner of an accessory. At times he seems to be invoked more out of despair than conviction. What contributes to this impression is the fact that the majority of the Badjao cultic activities are born out of the need for self-defense and liberation from evil. Tuhan is good and does not do evil.

This impression can be partly corrected when, from quantitative observations, one comes to examine the interior attitudes of the Badjao religious person. These attitudes most of all reveal the ultimate meaning of the various prayers and cultic activities, and in the last instance show the true role of the various spirits. These attitudes are modulated on the behavioral patterns that regulate human relations. Most used are the patterns that command relations between persons of different age and social status. Here, the concept of *pag-addat* or respect plays a particularly important role.

The primary relationship based on *pag-addat* is that between children and their parents. This relationship can find an extension outside the family. A Badjao explained, "We have the habit of calling all the elderly with the title 'uncle' or 'aunt.' It does not mean that we are all relatives. It is a form of *pag-addat* towards one who is older." *Pag-addat* requires that one treats with

respect the persons whom one considers important. For example, they must be invited to feasts. "We Badjaos have pag-addat towards our dead. Because of this, when someone dies, all go to the funeral even though we are not relatives."

In the religious ambit, the concept of pag-addat offers a theoretical framework that allows the resolution of ambiguities in the multidimensional cultic activity of the Badjao. It justifies, side by side with the faith and the cult of Tuhan, the faith and the cult of the other spirits.

The saitan are certainly the spirits most difficult to accommodate. Like Tuhan, they are absolute spirits. Both conceptually and in practice, they can assume a dialectic position and prejudice the position of Tuhan. They are spirits capable of doing harm. They instill much fear and, consequently, receive more attention. The conflict of interest between these spirits and Tuhan is resolved in the concept of pag-addat which, in this case, takes the form of a "request for permission." Whenever the Badjao intends to address these spirits, maybe to pacify their anger with a prayer, the Badjao first asks "the permission of Tuhan."

Umboh and the spirits of the ancestors can be a problem for opposite reasons. They are good spirits and act beneficially. But they are not absolute spirits and their beneficial powers are derived. In this case the pag-addat shapes itself in the form of "mediation." When, for example, a person gets sick, the Badjao often addresses and asks the help of these spirits as well. In the process Tuhan is also invoked. "In reality," they say, "Tuhan is the one who heals. The ancestors only play the role of mediators. They carry to Tuhan human invocations, adding their own invocations."

Ultimately, the practice of pag-addat is the first and most elementary cultic act towards Tuhan. In this act, Badjaos recognize the existence of a sacred power, first and absolute, that transcends any moral or aesthetic qualification. In the practice of pag-addat, Badjaos express their total dependence and submission to this sacred power.

The cult of Tuhan develops not only within the pag-addat shaped in the framework of rites addressed to other spirits.

Outside this framework, Tuhan can be invoked directly with short oral prayers, but more often with acts of mental devotion. These cultic acts can be done "only for respect." More frequently they are done in thanksgiving. "When, for example, we receive rice, we say thanks to Tuhan." He is almost always invoked to ask for help. Therefore, when Tuhan is mentioned, this is not a mere expediency that allows the invocation of a nearer power while avoiding making the supreme spirit jealous.

The essence of the cult of Tuhan is illuminated when, independent of any negative situation, one seeks to insure or promote the well-being of life. During pregnancy and childbirth, Tuhan has preeminence and all the ancestors might be relegated to minor roles. Tuhan, most of all, can help. The special power that qualifies the panday comes from Tuhan. The prayers with which the panday assists and helps the woman in labor are special prayers, mostly addressed to Tuhan.

The reference to Tuhan as creator and giver of life is particularly explicit in the rite, Pag-hinan ni Tuhan, which literally means "the work or the creation of Tuhan." It is one of the major Badjao rites, celebrated when a married woman gets pregnant for the first time. This is a rite of initiation that gives recognition to the woman's ability to procreate. This ability, as the name clearly suggests, is a work of Tuhan, the creator.

Can One Speak of a Truly Supreme Being?

The Badjao religious awareness postulates and recognizes the existence of an absolute power which is revealed and encountered in two sacred forms. They correspond to two totally distinct cosmic areas: sky and earth. In the sky, this power is personalized in Tuhan. On earth, it is personalized in the various saitan.

These forms reveal two distinct understandings of the sacred. Tuhan celebrates the transcendence of sacred power. Perceived as beyond all conditions, it reveals itself in his perfection, purity, and charm. The saitan, on the other hand, celebrate the most important specializations of this sacred power: its strength and its vitality.

In the saitan, the sacred power "becomes incarnate." In becoming incarnate, it becomes near and accessible, primarily in the physical sense. By taking up residence in a sacred seat, the sacred power comes to dwell and live among human beings. Consequently a Badjao can choose to approach it or avoid it. Being incarnate, the sacred power becomes accessible even conceptually. A symbolic reading of the seats of the saitan can inspire the Badjao to explore the essence and the nature of the sacred and begin to describe its personality. From the behavior of the various saitan, the Badjao apprehends a sacred meaning to guide his or her own religious behavior.

Incarnate, the sacred power also assumes aspects of the material, the semblances of contingency which characterize earthly realities. In the saitan, the absolute is no longer perfectly absolute. The concept of an inaccessible and mysterious power that inscrutably regulates human life is lost and at times even trivialized. In the saitan, the absolute gets judged, criticized, and at times even described as "an evil spirit." The Badjao may even feel capable of manipulating it, partly at least.

Only in freeing itself from material limitations can the sacred power find its perfection. Tuhan does not dwell in the sky in the same way that a saitan dwells in a rock or a sacred tree. In the sky, there is no "incarnation" of Tuhan. The sky is only the symbol of his radical transcendence. Once this total transcendence has been affirmed in uranian symbolism, the sacred power can receive the predication of any divine attribute. In Tuhan every perfection resides. He is the absolute par excellence. He is the absolute that possesses every power.

In a word, Tuhan is Tuhan: Lord. This name connotes first of all superiority and complete dominion. Tuhan knows no equals. No other power, either in the sky or on the earth, can stand beside him. Even the saitan, the only other absolute spirits, remain secondary. In Tuhan, one can surely recognize the supreme being.

This supreme being, however, is as remote in his existence as he is perfect by definition. The response to the mystery surrounding his being ends in isolating him. Tuhan appears

as a divinity who lives apart in a world of his own. He is not easily convinced and does not get involved in human affairs.

Though remote, he is not absent. The name *Tuhan*, "Lord," speaks also of ownership and possession. The universe and all its parts remain always in Tuhan's hands. All are governed by him, indirectly—as we shall see—through Umboh, his first creature and mediator. But he is always ultimately in charge.

It is in this sense of ownership and possession that Tuhan's name reveals its most important religious meaning, that which truly sums up the Badjao religious man's experience. Tuhan is the lord of everything and everyone, but particularly he is the lord of the Badjaos. And the Badjaos consider themselves his. They are possessed by him, and their attachment to their religion and their beliefs is profound. Tuhan is lord above all in the sense that he is the origin and the lord of life. Utilitarian concerns might advise the maintenance of good relations with powers who appear as nearer and more dangerous, manipulators of everyday life. Ultimately, the Badjao religious man will always have final recourse to Tuhan, the lord of life. And through Umboh, he will never fail to call on him.

3

The First Man

THOSE WHO FOLLOW THE TEACHINGS of Mohammed and believe in Allah are called Muslims. The disciples of Jesus Christ are called Christians. Those who follow the Badjao religious tradition love to be described as "Umboh." The name of the first man, and the great Badjao ancestor, is also the name of their religion.

The Badjaos describe Umboh as a being, male in gender, very old and dressed in black. These representations have symbolic value. About the color, the Badjaos say only, "Black is not a beautiful color, but it is a matter of taste. Umboh likes that color. The reason is not known. But the fact that he likes it has to be respected." In the main rituals for Umboh, black or dark-colored cloths are used. It may be that black is needed to distinguish Umboh from Tuhan, who is dressed in white. To establish this distinction is important, because in many respects, Umboh seems to reflect Tuhan's personality. He shares in the divine prestige to the point that, according to the Badjaos themselves, some may confuse him with Tuhan. Those considered experts among the Badjaos explain, "For us, Umboh is only our ancestor, but for some he is the same as Tuhan, and at the time of the rice harvest they thank him as if he were Tuhan."

Like Tuhan, Umboh is old. But in the case of Umboh, old age does not indicate eternity. Tuhan is eternal. Umboh is a

creature. Tuhan created him "a long time ago, at the beginning of time," when life made its first appearance on the surface of the earth.

At times Umboh is described as "Apo Adam." *Apo* stands for "old," "grandfather," "forefather" in the ancestral sense. But Umboh is not to be mistaken for an ancestor who lived and died in an ancient past. Umboh does not die. Nor is he subject to the passing of the historical time in which the Badjaos live. Though he is not eternal, this ancestor lives in a time which is beyond history, in a time very similar to eternity. It is what can be called "primordial time," which can become present in all times.

In explaining him, the Badjaos say that their Umboh is none other than "Adam and Eve." It is a superb comparison. Among other things, it shows how well the Badjaos understand the significance of certain Islamic or Christian beliefs. The image of Adam and Eve is only an analogy, for Umboh does not connote two persons. The concept of an original first couple is foreign to the Badjao mind.

Umboh's appearance as a male being registers a sexual asymmetry. Is this a connotation derived from an acknowledgment of the primacy of the male in society? Umboh's masculinity, then, could be a way to emphasize the superiority of the primordial creature. Certainly, it does not describe a characteristic in opposition to femininity. From the point of view of sexual functions, Umboh is indifferent.

The image of Adam and Eve eventually serves to underline the copresence in Umboh of both male and female potentialities. We are still at the level of totality. Umboh reveals the completeness of the androgen. He is the Adam, male, before becoming "Ish" and "Ishah" as biblically expressed.

There seems to be no myth recounting the great deeds of Umboh. As seen in the chapter 1, he recites a small part in the mythical "dialogue on life." Nothing more about him is known. He appears as a being coming out of the blue, without a real mythology, bursting forth in the Badjao mind as a symbol that reveals something permanent about human life. He is the ideal ancestor: the prototype of man. He is the summation of an ontological anthropology, valid for all times and all places.

Solitary and silent, he appears as a simple being, with a simple soul. Before him, there is no great struggle over moral alternatives. Therefore he does not know any internal tension or division which could disturb his serenity or the order of his relations. He is simply what he should be: "the true Badjao," one may say. Whatever the Badjaos could be or should be, in the end they always remain simple creatures who, before reflection, feel and live in a very immediate way the pleasure and the goodness of existing. They are people with an innocent and uncomplicated attachment to their survival.

MEDIATOR

The main role of this human prototype must be sought in his position. He is both between Tuhan and man, and high above in the ladder of creation. From this position, his character and activities are derived. "Umboh," the Badjaos explain, "is a 'mediator,' the first mediator given by Tuhan to man."

Popular piety describes him in the act of presenting human prayers before Tuhan. When one prays to Umboh to heal a person, the one addressed is ultimately always Tuhan. Only he can heal. "Umboh is the intermediary—like one who takes a message to somebody living on the other side of the village. We Badjaos do the same when we have to deal with more important people. It is our culture. One should not approach Tuhan directly."

To understand the meaning of Umboh's contribution, we should not forget that he is the first mediator given by Tuhan to men. Badjaos strongly emphasize that Umboh is the first. First means primarily that Umboh is the first fruit of creation: the very first creature, who carries in himself, still fresh, the signs of his origins. The very power of the creator rested and was pleased to dwell in him. Umboh comes directly from Tuhan's hands and in the presence of the creator, Umboh is free to move and live.

In this sense Umboh becomes the ideal mediator, the most effective intercessor. In the *pag-umboh*, Umboh's own rite, the prayer is set in primordial time, the time of creation. It is a

creative prayer that brings forth life—"the long life," as the Badjaos put it.

"Being the first" places him above all earthly realities, visible and invisible. He extends his primacy over two distinct domains, like two concentric zones. At the core is a central domain with the Badjaos and, more broadly, the whole of humanity. A second more diffused domain embraces the whole of creation.

First over Humanity

Umboh is the first man, the first Badjao. He is the center from which all the Badjaos emerge and in whom all the Badjaos find themselves united. This concept is not meant to suggest a human kinship with Umboh as primogenitor of a Badjao genealogical succession. Umboh's relation to humankind appears to be more a mystical kinship in which he is above all and cares for all. He is a family head, not so much in the sense of flesh and blood, but as one who provides, cares for, watches over, and defends.

To describe this primacy, the symbolism of the "head" is used. As we will soon see, to emphasize this concept, the liturgical activities in honor of Umboh call for a precise orientation in space, visualized in the form of the human body with Umboh at the place of the head. There is a dual analogy here. First, the human body is used as a symbol of Badjao society with the leaders in the position of the head. The social body is then extended to include all Badjaos, living and dead. This second society could be described as the "mystical body" with Umboh as the leader or head. He rises above with his authority and nobility. He is the head ancestor.

One cannot fail to note the anthropological significance this view has for the Badjaos. Umboh is a clear and living statement about their human dignity. Daily they know hunger, thirst, and toil. In society, they are not viewed sympathetically. They are looked down upon, mistreated, and even considered worthless. In Umboh, however, each Badjao finds himself or herself again. Like all others, the Badjao is a human being with dignity, an inestimable dignity which animals, plants, and other earthly realities can never know.

Umboh not only provides on the basis of a purely personal relationship. His role as head unfolds in history and is made concrete in society through its establishment and traditions.

In the strict sense, the term *umboh* refers to this mythical ancestor, the first man, Apo Adam. The same term, however, is also used for the historical ancestors—the people who actually lived and died in the past. Not all the dead find a place among these ancestors. Only those who live in the memory of the people are considered umboh. What counts is not blood relationship, but personal merit.

Each of these famous spirits usually survives in a living person. These are the spirits who give special power to the elders, the *panday*, and the parents in the village. As a consequence, and by analogy, the term umboh becomes an expression of respect. The young address the elders of the village with this term. Both mother and child respect as umboh the panday who assisted at the birth. Children often address their parents as umboh.

All these minor umboh, along with the real leaders—who though not addressed as umboh are enabled by the spirit of an ancestor to do their job—constitute the assembly of the great and good who enrich the life of the Badjao community. They are the persons who favor the development of individuals and the growth of society. Their position is sustained in the authority of Umboh, and they are his ministers. They mediate his role as head. Through them, Umboh unifies and provides for the entire Badjao body.

The Badjao tradition has no mythical source rooted in primordial time. Umboh is not a civilizing hero who promulgated laws or suggested specific models of behavior. The Badjao tradition is a reality that comes from the historical past, from the historical ancestors, and from the elders.

Actually, the Badjaos do not speak of a single tradition. Each tribe has its own traditions for celebrating certain rites or fixing a dowry. Different traditions sometimes suggest contrasting solutions. Also for this reason the Badjaos prefer endogamous marriages. Such avoid conflicts and allow greater fidelity to the tribal tradition.

But Umboh loves tradition and wants respect for the old. Like the elders and the ancestors, Umboh does not like change or novelty. He loves the old-fashioned ways. He is a traditionalist. With the help of the historical ancestors—the minor umboh—Umboh sees to it that the ways of living and behaving “transmitted from antiquity” are not altered. He watches that care and respect for the elderly is maintained. In Umboh, the ethical order that regulates public and private life finds its ultimate sanction and normative value.

First over Creation

As well as being the first man, Umboh is the first of all creation. As such, he is the supreme point towards which all creation converges. As we will soon see, the pag-umbuh ritual boldly expresses the idea that, in the created structure of the world, there is an orientation. Umboh is the point of reference, the center in which all things find their synthesis and harmonious unity.

His primacy is chronological, but above all ontological. Umboh is the principle that generates life, the fountainhead from which all created things receive their existence and at which they regenerate and renew themselves. As one Badjao brilliantly explained, “Adam and Eve are the ones who created the vegetation and the rest!” He added, “Tuhan is not an ancestor. Adam and Eve are ancestors. And the ancestors are the ones who look after life.”

Umboh does not live in Eden, in a garden where he acts as lord, caretaker, or laborer. For the Badjaos, the position of man in creation is not defined by his ambitions over it. He does not care to subjugate it. Nor does he feel himself a slave to work, toiling and sweating, waiting for the rain, and looking anxiously to the future. A Badjao simply lives from day to day.

Umboh lives, concerned only that there always be life in the cosmos and that it be abundant. It is not by chance that he is found in the mythical “dialogue of life.” It is in ritual activity, however, that one can find the clearest indications of his field of responsibility. Just as the saitan have favorite

dwelling places, so does Umboh. He enters the world and communicates with men through the coconut and the rice of the pag-umboh. These are the signs of vegetation, the symbols par excellence of cosmic vitality. They are not permanent dwelling places and last only for the duration of the rite.

THE RITE OF THE PAG-UMBOH

The pag-umboh is a solar ritual. The history of religions witnesses the presence of similar rituals among several ancient cultures, especially in the Mediterranean and Central American regions. Ancestors and vegetation are the two typical themes of these rituals. Ancestors stand for the whole of humanity, and vegetation for the whole of creation. They are two halves of a whole, the cosmos. At their center, with responsibility over the cosmos, these rites often have a sovereign. In this position, the Badjaos place Umboh. In the pag-umboh he is honored as the head who presides over the ancestors, vegetation, and the cosmos itself.

The Setting: Sacred Time

Two special moments delimit the sacred time of the pag-umboh. They stand out for their symbolic significance. The first is noon; or more precisely, midday.

"When can we start?" I asked the main celebrant. "At midday," he replied. My watch said it was already past noon, but he was not yet moving. Chewing tobacco, squatting in front of his hut, he waited. From time to time, with his hand as a shield, he checked the position of the sun. Finally, after scrutinizing the sky for the last time, he stood up and solemnly observed, "Now it is midday."

By my watch, it was past one o'clock, but that was irrelevant for the celebrant. The watch indicates secular time, something a non-Badjao might care to measure but unimportant to a Badjao. His attitude towards time changes sharply when he enters the religious world. Midday then must be

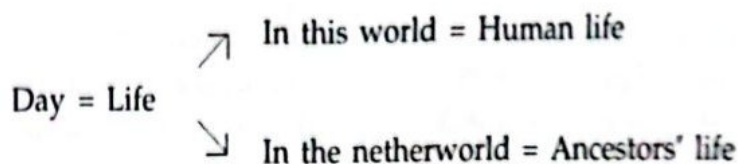
precisely midday, not a moment earlier or later. "It has to be so, because it has been like that since time immemorial." The pag-umboh can begin only when the sun is at its zenith.

The sun in fact is not a simple measure of time. In the pag-umboh, it plays one of the major roles. It has to be there. If the sky is cloudy, the pag-umboh cannot be done and will be postponed for another day. And it has to be at the zenith because one wants it at the height of its splendor and power.

The other important moment is morning, the time when the pag-umboh is closed. Once the opening rites are celebrated, the sacred matter, and with it Umboh, remain in the sacred space for a prescribed number of days—three, five, or seven. The duration varies according to family tradition. When asked, though, to specify the length of the pag-umboh, the Badjaos give rather vague answers. For example, those whose tradition prescribes three days speak generally of "three, four days." This apparent relativism is due to the fact that the pag-umboh always begins at midday and always ends in the morning after the third (fifth, or seventh) day. From here the vagueness, which sounds so dissonant in the field of liturgy, indirectly emphasizes the importance given to those two precise moments. In a world without seasons, they stand out as particularly powerful times. They are the two times that insert the pag-umboh in a cosmic dimension of solar structure.

The sun, that is at the origin of day, appears to stand at the origin of life. And, at a symbolic level, it appears as the star of life. While the midday sun celebrates its fullness, the morning sun celebrates its birth. As such, the morning sun generates also an initiatory context. As we will see later, all the great rites of initiation are set in the morning. The closing of the pag-umboh must be read in this context.

The sun is the star of life not only for the living. Just as during the day it goes through the realm of the living, during the night it goes through the realm of the dead, bringing its light even to them. Here, in its light, those in darkness and in the shadow of death once more find their day and their life. At a symbolic level, their existence depends on the sun.



As mentioned before, not all the dead are equal. The Badjaos divide these spirits into two different groups. One can generically be described as "the spirits of the dead." These are the spirits of the recently deceased, as well as the spirits of those long dead whose destiny as good or evil was determined by whether they found peace or not. The second group is the historical ancestors—the spirits of those who are ideally and ritually with the great ideal ancestor, Umboh. The ancestors are not simply "dead." They are a new reality.

This different nature of theirs presupposes a change, an initiation that confers the ancestors with a new mode of existence and separates them from the world of the ordinary dead. It presupposes a rite that creates the passage. This rite has to be hypothesized, but it would surely be described as "the initiation rite of the ancestors."

Such a rite can easily be conceptualized. Like all the great rites of initiation, it would be found in the morning framework. But different from those initiation rites administered for men and by men, this rite is beyond human control. The celebrant is the cosmos itself. At a symbolic level, the morning appears as the first, natural, great initiation rite. There is the passage from darkness to light. There is the birth of a new day. It is precisely in the drama of this cosmic rite that such an initiation rite of the ancestors would take shape and be celebrated.

In the symbolism of the passage from darkness to light, one can read the passage of the spirit from the realm of the dead to the realm of the ancestors—like all initiatory passages, bristling with difficulties. Those who fail would find themselves condemned forever as prisoners of darkness and death, their names forgotten. Those who pass the test would move, with the birth of a new day, into a new form of existence. They would live as ancestors together with Umboh.

In such a cosmic scenario and rite, the central role belongs to the sun. By presiding over the passage from darkness to

light and the birth of day, it at the same time presides over the initiation rite of the ancestors. Ultimately, those who pass the ordeal and enter into the realm of Umboh are only those spirits of the dead who are able to enter the trail of the sun. Ancestors could truly be said to have a solar existence. Death would no longer touch them.

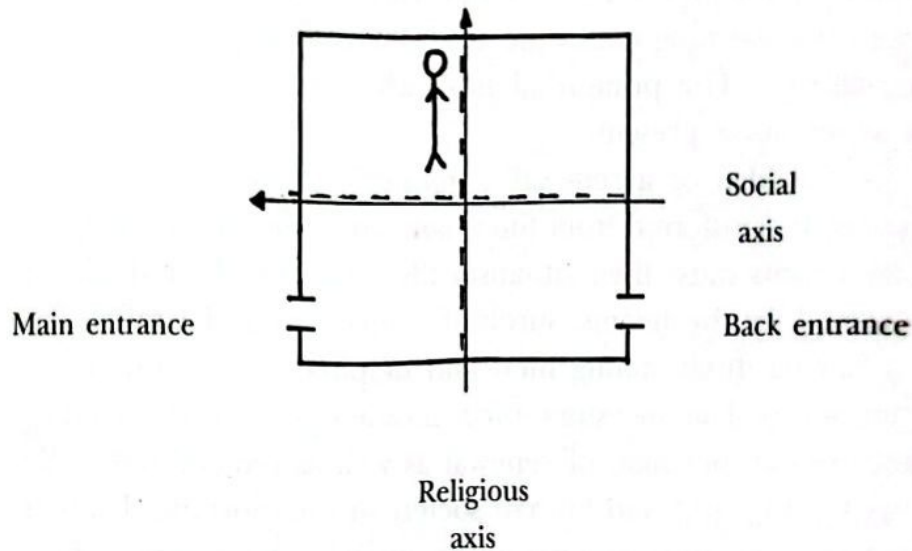
In this context, the closing of the pag-umboh at dawn becomes highly significant. One can envision the ancestors and Umboh awaiting the sun, the star of their life, to rejoin it and return with it to their dwelling place. The morning is the time of the initiation rites, evoking the great initiatory ordeal of the ancestors, their own birth moment. At the same time, the morning marks the symbolic recreation of the great beginnings. The primordial time when Umboh was created is again made present.

Is the idea of a renewal suggested? In liturgical actions, *barakat* is transferred from the imams to those who are helped. The imams must then ritualistically replenish their depleted power. Like the imams, surely the ancestors and Umboh, after having dwelt among men and helping them, must renew themselves. The ancestors' birth moment, like every birthday, becomes an occasion of renewal as well as remembrance. By leaving the earth and human society in the morning, Umboh and the ancestors regenerate themselves. They renew their reserves of energy.

The Setting: Orientation in Space

The Badjao hut is only one room, ideally arranged along two perpendicular axes that intersect at its center. The first axis—which can be called the “social axis”—goes from the back of the hut facing away from the village to the front of the hut facing the center of the village. The main entrance is located at the front wall to the left of the social axis. The back entrance at the opposite wall is also to the left of the social axis. The food is cooked at the front of the hut. The place for defecation is at the back.

The space to the left of the social axis, where the *doors* are found, is described as "the side of the feet," and the wall on that side is called "the wall of the feet." The space to the right of the social axis is described as "the side of the head" and its wall becomes "the wall of the head." Head-to-feet describes the "religious axis." As indicated by the language used, this axis is visualized as a human body, lying on the floor, with the head near the wall of the head and the feet in the direction of the wall of the feet.



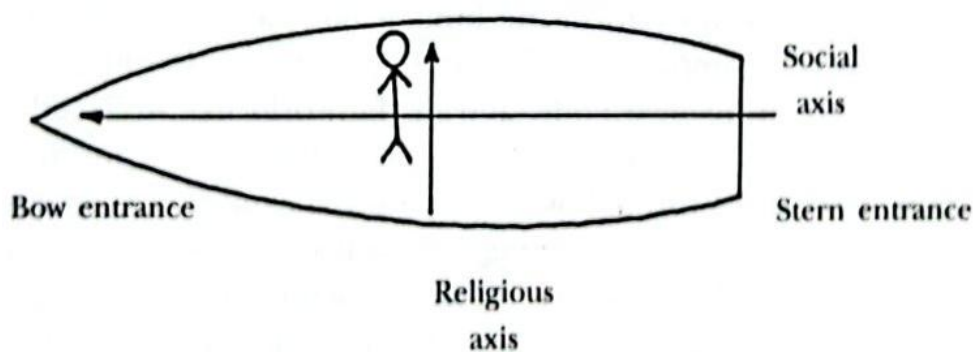
Floor plan of a-Badjao dwelling. The most protected area, on the religious level, is naturally the most sacred.

Ideally, people should always sleep in this position, though in daily life it is not always used. During the pag-umboh, however, it is the only acceptable position and is scrupulously observed. When the shape of the house does not allow for an easy recognition of the religious axis, the wall of the head is found on the most protected and intimate side of the house, where the residents sleep at night and nap during the day.

The ideal orientations reflect the directions in the *lepa* boat. The once-famous *lepa* is passing out of use, but it continues

to be the model for every Badjao dwelling place. In the *lepa*, the social axis moves from stern to bow. In the *kumpit* that today replace the *lepa*, the bow (front) from where the boat is anchored is often described as "the side of the anchor." The stern (back) is sometimes described as "the side of the *biral* and the *pettah*," two small boats pulled behind the *kumpit* and used to go to and from the *kumpit*. Obviously, in this case the boat's entrance is found at the stern. Idiomatically, however, "the entrance" is always said to be at the bow, where it was in the *lepa*. This is the entrance that is used on ritual occasions like marriages.

In the *lepa*, to the left of the social axis at the bow (the entrance), a terra-cotta jar for cooking food was kept. To the left of the social axis at the stern (the back), was the place for defecating. As in the days of the *lepa*, today in the *kumpit* the orientations are mainly ideal. The religious axis becomes explicit during ritual occasions when those who lie down to rest, especially the sick, stretch out on this axis with their feet towards "the side of the feet" and the head on "the side of the head."⁸



*Arrangement on the Badjao boat. Lying down on the religious axis is the ideal position. In a small boat like the *lepa*, this may be very uncomfortable. Though absurd from the human point of view, it has a profound religious meaning.*

Sacred and Profane. The attributes of the social axis can be summarized in the following polarities:

Front	Back
Entering into the social	Withdrawing from the social
Place for cooking	Place for defecation

These are not rigidly held to. The place for cooking might easily be moved to the back. After all, the social axis regulates only human realities—daily activities and social relationships. Its significance lies in its position at the profane end of the religious axis. By contrast, it can help in identifying the other pole, the sacred.

In the Badjao dwelling, the religious axis is defined by the following polarities:

Right	Left
Head	Feet
Sacred activity and Umboh	Profane activity

These polarities find in the human body a realistic formulation, which comparative religion well explains. Man lives out his destiny in his own body, and in the world like in a body. Thus the human body becomes a metaphor—if not the primary metaphor—through which man orders and interprets his world. As we have seen, among the Badjaos the symbolism of the body allows a discourse on the structure of society. The same symbolism paves the way for a discourse on the structure of the Badjao dwelling, as well as of the cosmos which to that dwelling, symbolically, is reduced.

This metaphor does not remain an abstraction, but is realized in its physical form, the human body. Lying along the religious axis, it becomes a substantial description of the surrounding space and, like the needle of a compass, gives coordinates. The head reveals the lesser value of the feet and

anything found on the side of the feet. Likewise, the inferiority of the things on the side of the feet emphasizes the superiority of what is found on the opposite side. Only what is found on the side of the head is of real value.

Eventually, in the Badjao dwelling, the sacred is no longer completely ineffable. It is perceived as something that surpasses everything that can happen on the side of the feet, or in everyday life. It is something that can only happen on the opposite side: there, beside the wall of the head—"beyond" that wall, but always in the direction indicated by the head.

In this configuration, the Badjao dwelling, whether a boat or a hut, is placed in a cosmic-religious context. Arranged around the religious axis and oriented towards the sacred, it enters a superior dimension. No longer a banal commodity, it becomes a temple. The Badjaos do not have buildings reserved solely for cult. Their temples are their dwellings. Under the appearance of being part of daily life, each Badjao hut carries a sacred mark, and those who dwell there live in the shadow of the sacred.

The "wall of the head" becomes like a window opening to the sacred. Through this window the sacred enters the house, takes shape, and becomes tangible in the course of the various rites. In the boat, as in the hut, the liturgicoreligious activities take place on the side of the head, the most sacred place. This is where Umboh positions himself when he visits the house during the pag-umbuh.

Ultimately it is Umboh himself who takes over, together with the sum of images which describe him as head of all creation and of the human race, and mediator before Tuhan. Though the human body continues to mark the religious axis, it is Umboh who defines the sacred-profane dichotomy, and dictates the orientations in space.

Often the wall of the head is called "the wall of Umboh." That wall becomes like an imprint that will continue to speak of Umboh, even after the pag-umbuh has ended and Umboh is no longer physically present. Like an empty place at the table, that wall will continue to evoke his presence and the salvific event which took place there. Gazing towards the wall,

the Badjao religious man passes to the "beyond" and enters the sacred world. It is a very practical way to encounter Umboh whenever the need arises. As will be seen in detail later, this orientation is also used in the marriage rite when the spouses are united, facing the wall of the head with their backs towards the people.

The thought of Umboh's place is always there, even in the course of daily life. Once, a Badjao was putting in a cistern to collect rainwater from the roof of the house. After the work had already started, his wife became disturbed. Though outside the hut, the cistern would be behind the wall of the head. Should Umboh visit the house in the future, the cistern would disturb and irritate him. Umboh does not like modernity and he cannot stand noise.

Creation of the Sacred Space. The sacred space for receiving Umboh is created by setting off an area in front of the wall of the head. In the construction of the hut, no shelves, brackets, hooks, or other objects difficult to remove should be placed there. In preparation for the ritual, all furnishings that clutter the space are removed. One removes even the piece of iron hanging from the ceiling for the lantern, as well as the rope and the hōs, which serves as a sort of hanging cradle for sleeping babies. It is a scrupulous search for the void. Once, I noticed an old man, in choosing the place for Umboh, looking for a zone free even from the central beam of the roof. Pictures, pieces of newspaper, frames are covered or removed. Finally, the floor is conscientiously swept.

Once cleared, the chosen space is decorated with one's most beautiful *tepoh*. On the wall of the head, the tepoh is hung from a bar, a meter-and-a-half long. The bar hangs horizontally half a meter from the floor. This bar is usually a permanent fixture, another small reminder of the sacredness that marks that space. The tepoh drapes down and extends along the floor, forming the first element that defines the sacred space.⁹

On the tepoh, pillows, bundles of clothes, or simple boxes are arranged to form three sides of a rectangle, open towards the wall of the head. One pillow is placed on each short side perpendicular to the wall. Three more pillows form the third

side, parallel to the wall. The wall of the head and the pillows create a space of about one foot by three feet. This is where Umboh's sacred matter, the palay and the coconut, will be placed.

These preparations can be photographed because the pag-umboh has not yet begun. Even so, the Badjaos go about these activities most seriously and conscientiously, keeping talk to a minimum. Some have already put on their best clothes.

THE CELEBRATION

There are three types of pag-umboh. The Umboh Pai Baha-o—the Umboh of the new (*baha-o*) rice (*pai*)—is the primary rite, celebrated once a year. Of the three, this is the only rite celebrated in a festive context. Many still consider it “the grandest Badjao feast.” Celebrating it is a tradition that ought to be observed in all the families, whether or not there is a particular need to call on Umboh. The Umboh Pai, or the Umboh of the rice, and the Umboh Boa Saluka, or the Umboh of the coconut tree (*saluka*) fruit (*boa*), are minor pag-umboh derived from the Umboh Pai Baha-o. They may be celebrated at any time, whenever a particular need arises. Of the two, the Umboh Pai is considered more powerful. Though less solemn, its form greatly evokes the Umboh Pai Baha-o. The Umboh Boa Saluka is more modest.

According to the Badjaos, the distinction between the Umboh Pai and the Umboh Boa Saluka is linked to the fact that agricultural life develops in the periodic succession of two seasons. These two seasons are recognizable from their principal products, the coconut and the rice. While the coconut is available throughout the year, rice is a seasonal product. In this sense the Umboh Boa Saluka, which finds its liturgical time “at the end of the rice season,” may be regarded as a minor variant suggested not only by cultic precepts but also by convenience.

In the final analysis, it is the availability of rice that determines the liturgical times. The rice season is the time of the Umboh Pai. Limited availability makes rice precious. Because of this, the Umboh with the rice is considered “more powerful”

than the Umboh with the coconut. When they can choose, Badjaos prefer the Umboh Pai. The praxis is so widespread that whenever one generically talks of pag-umboh, by convention one means the celebration of the Umboh Pai.

Preparation

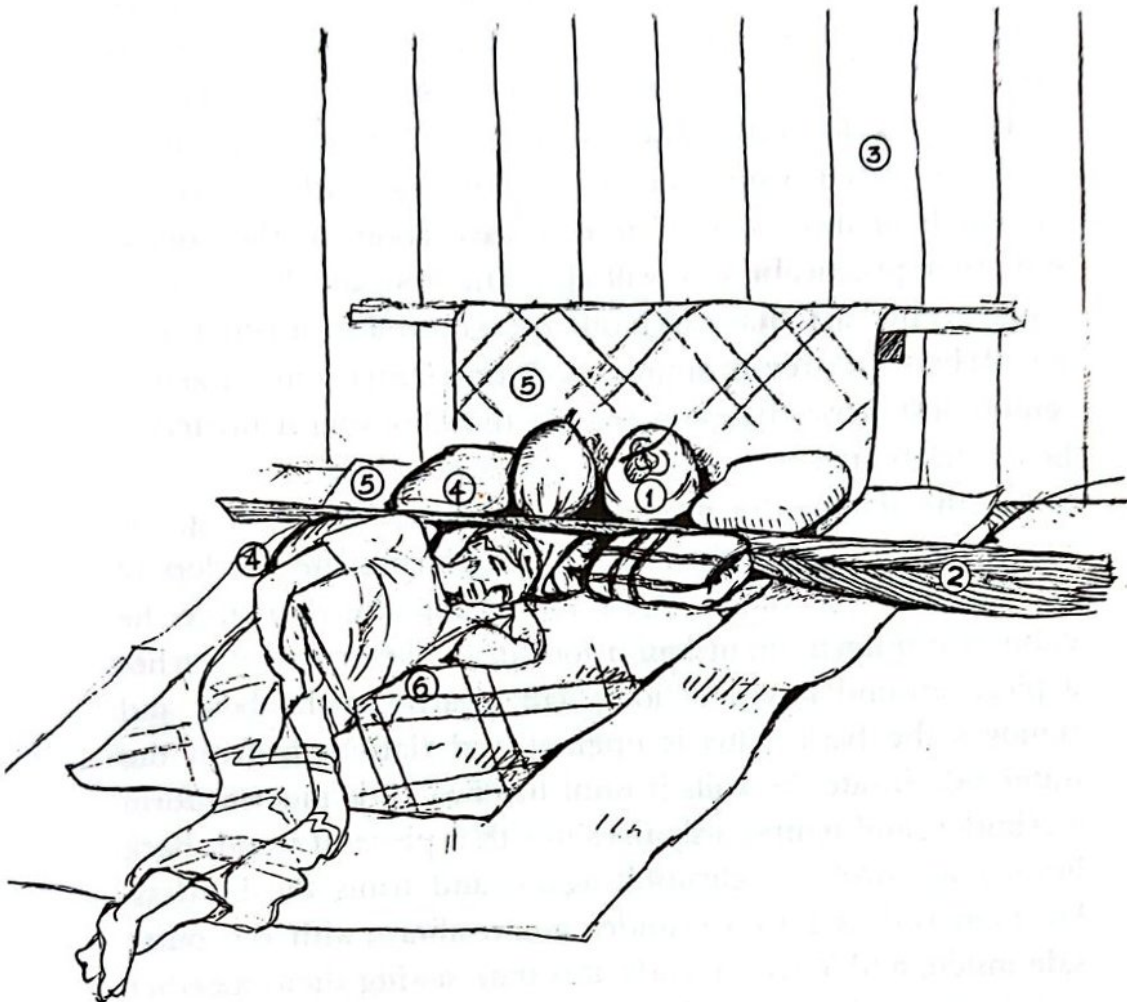
For the Umboh Boa Saluka, a branch and two coconuts are needed. The branch must still be young, with the leaves just separating from the stem and above all it must be fresh. The two coconuts must also still be green and very fresh. Careful attention is given to the picking of the branch and the coconuts. The man at the top of the tree discusses and chooses with the persons waiting below. He cuts the chosen branch and lets it fall gently to the ground. After throwing down some fresh coconuts to be eaten on the spot with his friends, he removes the two best and brings them down himself. He does not throw them for fear of breaking them.

The Badjaos, who do not have land, can get all this as a gift from friends or by buying them. They cannot pick them from the field without permission or, worse, steal them. As sacred matter for the rite, they must be perfect ethically as well as physically. Before the rite, the branch and the coconuts are just placed in a corner of the hut. Unlike the elements needed for the other types of pag-umboh, they may remain together.

As already noted, both the branch and the coconuts must still be very fresh. "Green" for the Badjaos is synonymous with vegetation. The branch and the coconuts therefore take upon themselves and sum up the vitalistic symbolism of vegetation. The fact that the coconut is a basic element in the food and life of the Badjaos is also significant.

The coconut is also symbolic as a seed. It is the biggest seed known to the Badjaos and germinates above ground, visible to everyone. In the plant as it grows, one can see the rising of life. In its form, the seed defines a receptacle, a shell where life, like in a womb, germinates and develops.

The primordial element can be recognized in the water contained inside. From that water the coconut tree is born.



Umboh Boa Saluka. The sacred matter consists of two young coconuts (1) and a green coconut branch (2), disposed in front of the wall of the head (3). Pillows and bundles (4) delimit the sacred area on the tepoh (5). Person in cultic position (6).

Waters, especially those of the morning rituals baths, as we shall see, are the source of power and life. The water of the coconut is the water of life par excellence. It is used on exceptional occasions as a form of a radical, ritual regeneration. When a child is born handicapped, it is bathed in coconut water, early in the morning. Less frequently, this water is used in funeral rites. A coconut is split on the tomb so that the dead can "quench his thirst" or "be washed."

For the Umboh Pai one needs a coconut, some palay, and the bark of a tree. The folded bark will be used like a basket to hold the palay. Unlike in the Umboh Boa Saluka, the coconut is not fresh, but mature. At home before the rite begins, palay and coconut are kept scrupulously separated.

The bark for the basket is taken "from a special tree." However, after having gone out several times with the Badjaos in search of this "special" tree, I have come to the conclusion that practically any will do. The special characteristic seems to be bark that can easily be removed in a ritual manner. When the tree is approached, non-Badjaos are asked to temporarily leave. It seems that in the choosing a mystery is being celebrated.

On the day of the pag-umboh, late in the morning, the main celebrant goes out in a boat exploring the borders of the bay near the village. After identifying the right tree, he chooses a branch about half a foot in diameter and detaches a piece around four feet long. He returns to the boat and removes the bark. This is opened and flattened. With the outer side inside, he rolls it until the two ends meet to form a cylinder, and temporarily fixes it with a piece of wood. Back home, he unrolls it, cleans it again, and trims the borders. He then rolls it into a cylinder anew, always with the outer side inside, and joins the ends, this time sewing them together with bamboo fibers. The final form is that of a cylinder with no bottom, fifteen to twenty centimeters high by twenty-five to thirty centimeters in diameter. All this is done with the devotion and care of a craftsman, in a very relaxed manner.

The themes in the previous pag-umboh suggested by the "green" symbology are recalled only indirectly in the Umboh Pai. Freshness and greenness can still be recognized in the bark used for the basket. But the ultimate symbolic value of the bark is to be sought in its origin, the tree. We have seen that the tree is the consummate symbol of the world of vegetation. These themes are found also in the rice. Unhusked, it maintains its links with the world of nature.

The rice and the mature coconut are products of the earth. They suggest images of abundance and fecundity. As Carmen Guerrero Nakpil put it so aptly in her book *The Rice Conspiracy*

(Manila 1990), in Southeast Asia, rice is the symbol of all nourishment. It is the precious cereal that traveling Buddhist monks planted in all the Asian countries along the borders of the Pacific and on the big islands. Millions of Malays, for thousands of years, have patiently irrigated and tilled rice fields carved into the slopes of hills. Bent over under the burning sun, knee-deep in mud, they have nursed the fragile seedlings in their calloused hands and entrusted them lovingly to the earth. Today the cycle continues: Long months pass, during which the flowers are transformed into full ears of grain that are then harvested, dried under the sun, pounded in mortars to remove the chaff. The precious grains are stored in sacks or baskets, for boiling, frying, wrapping in leaves, boiling in coconut milk.

For many Southeast Asians, rice not only fills the stomach but nourishes the spirit. It is one of the first things that enter a new house. And in no house are the rice containers left empty. Rice is set aside in preparation for a birth, for a local festival, a marriage, the New Year, or any feast that deserves being celebrated. Eating rice becomes a rite. With rice the joyful moments of life are celebrated, and the painful are grieved over. As an offering it is presented for the nourishment of the spirits and the cult of the gods. Rice has its own spirit, and one prays to it.

For the Badjaos, who live a marginal existence in this world of rice eaters, these white grains are more a dream than a daily source of nourishment. Substituted for by cassava in daily diet, rice becomes a precious food found only in their rites. Like water, in the rites "rice is never absent."

Postponing a Rite

Bad weather or a death in the village may require that the pag-umboh be postponed. In these cases one is faced with the problem of disposing of the sacred matter gathered for the rite. It cannot be stored for a long time. Otherwise, "all in the house will end up getting sick."

As pointed out previously, the coconut and the palay have a spirit. It is not yet the spirit of Umboh. It is a simple *sumangat*. According to the Badjaos, these are respectively "the

spirit of the coconut" and "the spirit of the palay" which "come alive" the moment the coconut and palay are acquired for the pag-umboh. These spirits "were already there," except that they had somehow been irrelevant. In fact "when one buys a coconut or some palay not intended for the pag-umboh, they can remain at home for even a year. Nobody would get sick."

To dispose of the matter intended for the pag-umboh, the celebrant or any of the elderly in the house must first address the spirit of the coconut and the spirit of the palay and explain why there was a setback. He begs them "not to get upset" if the pag-umboh cannot take place. He presents lots of excuses and asks that they be accepted. Then the coconut is opened, and the water and the meat consumed. The palay is polished, cooked, and eaten. Whatever remains, like the coconut shell or the branch of the coconut tree, is thrown into the sea.

The Rite

As noon approaches, the members of the family who are free gather in the house, conversing amicably in an atmosphere of serene religious waiting.

The moment to begin the rite comes. Outside, the sun has reached its zenith in the sky. Silence falls in the hut. In no particular order, the family members seat themselves on the floor. The celebrant in the middle receives the symbolic material presented to him one by one. In the bark cylinder he lays a black or dark-colored cloth, lining the cavity and letting the edges hang over the sides. Black is "the color of Umboh." In place of the cloth, some use hay which is placed in the cylinder to form a kind of nest.

The sack of rice is opened. With a bowl, the celebrant begins to measure the rice, pouring it into a *ligo* (a flat basket for winnowing rice). It is a slow and solemn action. In the silence, only the sound of falling palay can be heard. After enough rice has been taken, the sack with the remaining palay is closed and placed in a corner. Losing its religious purpose, it will lose its *sumangat*. It returns to the order of profane reality.

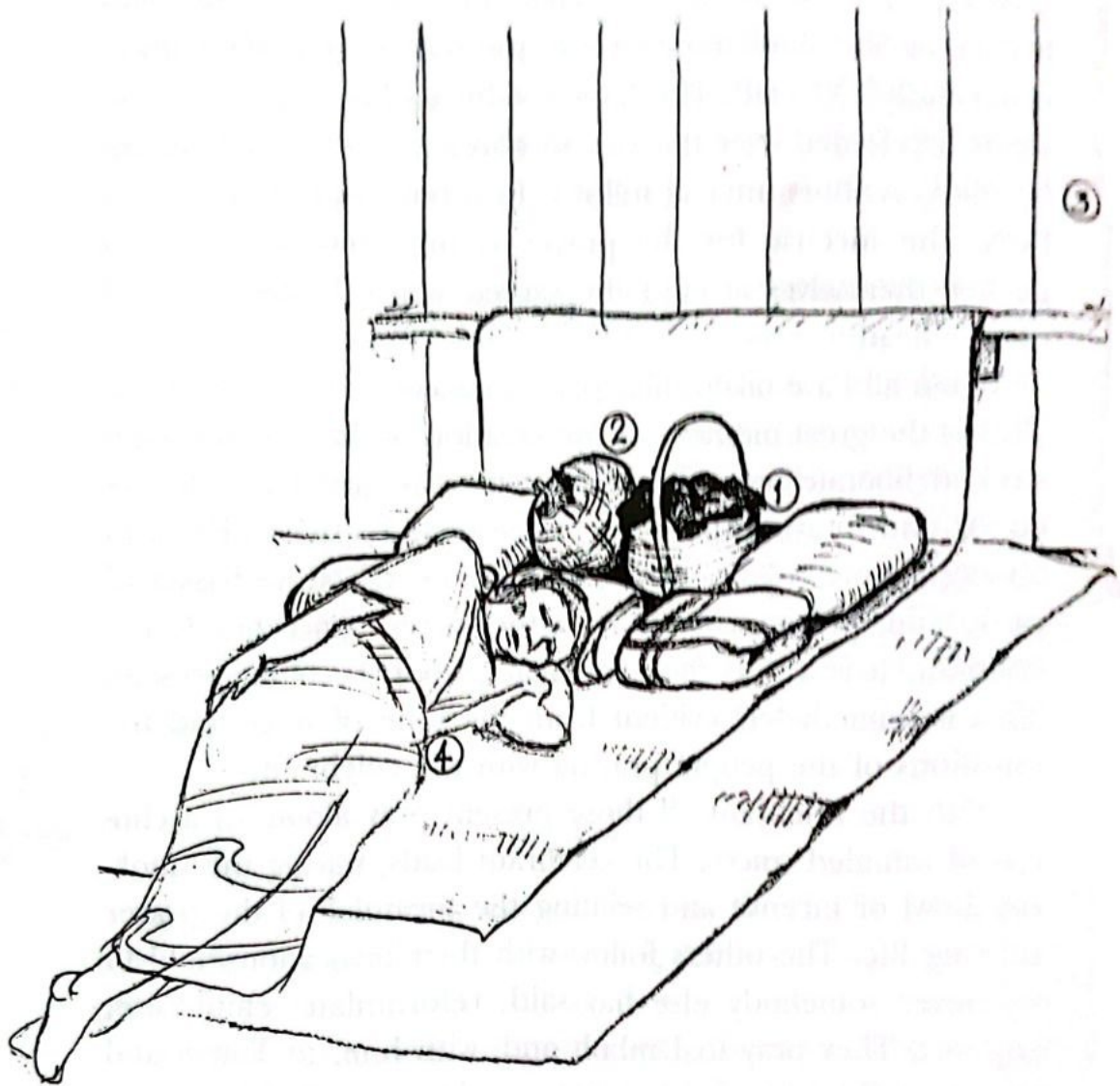
Attention returns to the celebrant. With a sense of religious crescendo, from the ligo he takes the measured palay with his hands and slowly pours it into the bark basket. Every grain is carefully collected. The basket is filled. The corners of the cloth are folded over the rice to cover it. The sacred matter is ready. A short interval follows. In a bowl with glowing embers, the incense for the prayer is prepared. The people gather themselves around the sacred space, beside the wall of the head.

When all have taken their places, concentration is regained. This is the great moment of the creation of the Umboh. With slow, deliberate movements, the celebrant first takes the coconut and, praying, places it in the sacred space.¹⁰ Then, in an even more solemn way, the celebrant takes the basket of palay and, praying, places it in the sacred space beside the coconut. It is at this moment that Umboh becomes present. This is immediately evident from the tone of voice and the emotions of the people praying with the celebrant.

With the celebrant all those present pray aloud, in a chorus of mingled voices. The celebrant leads, waving the smoking bowl of incense and reciting the formulae of the prayer of long life. The others follow with their invocations, add to whatever somebody else has said, reformulate, emphasize, support. They pray to Umboh and, with him, to Tuhan and the rest of the historical ancestors, who are called by name.

Very significantly, some raise their eyes in the direction of the wall of the head while praying, for the sacred power can be found in that direction. Others lean forward in order to speak closely to the coconut, for the sacred presence is inside. At the end, the bowl of incense is placed in the sacred space, between the coconut and the basket of rice. The creation of the Umboh has taken place. The people disperse and return to their daily tasks, but, from now on, aware of a sacred presence at home.

As mentioned above, in the case of the Umboh Pai, the coconut and palay are conscientiously kept far from each other before the rite. Ultimately, this makes more dramatic the convergence of the coconut and the palay in the sacred



Umboh Pai. Bark cylinder with black cloth inside and draped over the top holding the palay (1); Mature coconut (2); Wall of the head (3); Person in cultic position (4).

space. There seem to be no sexual connotations. This union simply represents the linking up of two forces symbolizing the creativity of the world of vegetation, a creativity that becomes exalted and strives at surpassing itself.

The Umboh Boa Saluka is much simpler. There is no difficult preparation of the bark basket. There is no opening liturgy that corresponds to the solemn pouring of the rice. The rite begins immediately at its core. Slowly and solemnly,

the celebrant places the two coconuts one after the other in the sacred space. Then the branch is placed parallel to the wall of the head, traversing the sacred space. Here the symbolism of the union is not very evident. The homage with the incense follows. The creation concludes with the placing of the incense bowl in the sacred space, beside Umboh.

Sacred Presence and Nearness

Umboh's presence imposes some rules of behavior. The primary one is that those lying down must position themselves with the head towards Umboh. This directive, valid all over the house, is, in practice, observed conscientiously only in the space nearest to Umboh, specifically in the space defined by the tepoh, which hangs from the wall of the head, runs under the Umboh, and extends towards the center of the house. Those lying in the cultic position often rest their heads on the pillows that delimit the sacred space.

The obligation to respect the cultic position does not apply to all persons in the same way. Children are left very free. However, for the elder of the house or the family head, it is a duty and an honor that must be fulfilled. By lying down in the cultic position, he becomes liturgist and mediator between the inhabitants of the house and Umboh. Oftentimes, the pag-umboh is celebrated for a sick person, and the rite is valued for its healing power. In this case, the privilege of occupying the place before Umboh goes to the sick person.

The pag-umboh places a person before the ancestors and close to their sacred power, the creativity of the fountainhead of life. Above all, this is why one celebrates the pag-umboh: to be immersed in the sacred power and in this way to receive benefit.

This religious theme is expressed and developed in a liturgy of nearness. Daily life apparently continues as usual. The people living with Umboh in the house continue to weave tepoh, prepare food, talk with friends inside and outside the house, as if nothing special were going on. In reality the guest is never forgotten. Umboh must never be left alone. Somebody must keep him company. Among the members of the

family there is silent agreement about this. When *one must* be absent and there is no relative around to take *one's place*, a neighbor may be approached to take *one's place*.

The house in which Umboh is present is under a taboo prohibiting the inhabitants from going "far away." The sense of nearness is relative. Some say, "One cannot leave home." Others comment that one can move around the village, but not "go fishing." Someone else explains that one "cannot go fishing to the other islands." The taboo can take different forms but it is clear that for the pag-umboh to be efficacious, one must let oneself be immersed.

When the pag-umboh is celebrated for a sick person, the duty to remain near Umboh falls almost exclusively on the sick person. When for whatever reason the sick person has to leave the space and the prescribed position, he or she can only move nearby. The more serious the condition, the greater the obligation to remain near. It is very difficult for the Badjaos to separate a seriously ill person from the Umboh, even in order to take him or her to a hospital. For instance, a child a few years old burning with fever was dying of malaria. She needed to be taken to the hospital for treatment. Only after long discussions and after hearing the advice of the elders, did the parents finally decide to take her to the hospital. Before leaving, they begged Umboh not to take offense. In another case, a woman in labor was delayed in the expelling of the placenta. The assistant health officer and the local missionary strongly advised her to go to the nearest clinic, to no avail. She wanted to remain near Umboh. Between modern medicine and Umboh, many Badjaos still prefer the latter.

From the beginning of the rite, throughout the time that Umboh remains present in the home, until the morning he is removed, the coconut and palay cannot be photographed. This prohibition may be indicative of the nature of the sacred presence which is evoked in the pag-umboh. The saitan do not need this kind of protection. They take up dwellings where and when they want. Their presence impresses itself upon man. However, photography is also prohibited in the rites for the dead during the wake after the funeral, when the spirit of the dead returns to its old home. Umboh's

presence, like that of the spirit of the dead during the wake, is a human creation characterized by the precariousness of the shadow world.

Closing

After the number of days prescribed by family tradition, the Umboh "is withdrawn." The event takes place early in the morning, with the rising of the sun. It is a very simple rite. In the house, few pay attention to it. Many continue to sleep, especially the children. The celebrant, oftentimes with a bowl of smoking incense, approaches the sacred place and speaks to Umboh. He explains what he is about to do and begs him not to get upset. He says, for example, "The days of the pag-umboh are over. Now I am taking back the coconut and the palay, and then we will eat them. Do not be angry with us anymore. We have paid our debt. Do not send us other sicknesses." The sacred presence is thus ended. "With the prayer, Umboh goes away."

The celebrant goes on to dispose of the sacred matter. The basket with the palay is first removed. It is passed on to anyone present to hull the rice in a mortar. Then the coconut is opened with a bolo and consumed. In the case of the Umboh Boa Saluka, the branch is removed first and then the two coconuts. Even these are immediately consumed. No prayers need be addressed to the sumangat of the palay and of the coconut. Once Umboh has left, no spirit remains in his place.

In consuming the rice and the coconut, there seems to be no connotation of communion with the sacred, although this idea should not be completely excluded. This is not the simple consumption of profane things. Rice, coconut meat, and water are shared among those present and consumed as if they were exceptionally healthy food and drink. Their symbolic meanings do not completely disappear with Umboh. They are in some way blessed.

The pillows and the tepoh that delimited the sacred space are removed. The space is swept carefully. Whatever is gathered with the chaff of the palay, the shells and the branch

of the coconut, is all thrown into the sea. Thus, one gets rid even of the sacred remnants.

UMBOH PAI BAH-A-O

The grand pag-umboh is undoubtedly the Umboh Pai Baha-o. It is a feast. "It used to be the Badjaos' greatest feast," the old people say, "but it is not so any more. Today young people do what the Muslims do, like in Sitankai, where the Badjaos think only of becoming a *hadji*. They have forgotten the traditions. It should be a feast greater than marriage. If you do not celebrate marriage, you will not get sick. But if you do not celebrate the Umboh Pai Baha-o, everybody in the house will end up sick."

Those who still respect this tradition celebrate the Umboh Pai Baha-o even for the existential and historical heritage that it evokes. During the days of the rite, one can often hear stories that are inconsistent with what is commonly associated with the Badjaos. They talk about bygone times, when the Badjaos, along with fishing, could "still" till the soil. They did not possess land but borrowed it from friendly neighbors. They alternately planted rice and cassava.

When the time for planting rice came, everybody went to the fields—men, women, and children. "They wore new clothes," and there was a festive atmosphere. Everybody worked. After the soil was weeded, a prayer was made. The family head went around the field with a bowl of incense and prayed to the spirit of the palay to help the plants to grow, defend them from pests, protect them from rats, and save them from drought. The same would also be done later on, if the harvest was in danger. According to one Badjao, "I remember when I was still a child, I saw my father go to the market and buy incense. He was worried about the rice. I saw him later on, going up and down the field with the burning incense. He was praying." The prayer took place in the late afternoon before nightfall, a time when the spirits roam.

At harvest time, "when the palay turned reddish," it was cut and placed for one night in a small storage shed in the field. This was done "so that the spirit of the palay would not go away

immediately." The people returned the following day, at day-break, to bring the palay home. As a custom, they left some in the field so that when a new planting season came, "the same palay would grow anew and give a good harvest." At home, the palay was placed in a corner near the wall of the head. During the night, "the women slept with the palay at the head." This was the original celebration of the Umboh Pai Baha-o.

Dreams of a people without land? Real memories of historical situations? It must not be forgotten that the Badjaos interrelate with the indigenous populations, especially with the Sama, with whom they barter and often establish family ties. By intermarrying, some Badjaos may end up working in the fields, or some Sama may end up on the sea with the Badjaos. But according to what they themselves say, the Badjaos too once planted rice, but no longer. With the arrival of outsiders (the Tausugs), many Sama friends who previously lent them land have left. The agricultural habits of the Badjaos have become more casual. Here and there they still plant cassava, but "with cassava one does not feast."

At the center of festival is the celebration of the true and proper pag-umboh. And central to that celebration is the head of a family, who as the head man is likened to the leaders in the social body and Umboh in the mystical body. In form, the Umboh Pai Baha-o closely resembles the Umboh Pai, with some variations and additions. In the opening rites, the role of the family head is emphasized, first of all in the act of creating the pag-umboh. Celebrant and family head are seated, one in front of the other, near the wall of the head. The family head is invited to bow his head. The celebrant then takes the sacred matter—the coconut, the basket of palay and the bowl of incense—and hands each over to the family head before placing it in the sacred space. The opening rites conclude with a sort of liturgical snack, with the family head distributing the food. The children are the first to receive a pinch of rice, which he places in their mouths. As the provider in the family, he evokes the image of Umboh as the provider for all.

The Umboh Pai Baha-o has a distinctive meaning specified by its seasonal context. It can be celebrated only during the span of two to three months starting around the beginning

of September when the new rice is harvested. Against this agricultural background, the rite takes on the meaning of thanksgiving and offering. The offering of the first fruits of the rice harvest is the symbolic offering of the entire harvest. And by offering their harvest, the Badjaos offer themselves. The small basket of rice becomes a pledge and a reminder, ultimately of their dependence on Umboh who guarantees their sustenance and their well-being.

The festive ensemble finally adds a communitarian dimension. It is not a collective celebration involving the whole Badjao community. It is a family celebration. In deciding the date of the pag-umboh, one makes sure that the men have returned from fishing. The main preoccupation is to provide an abundance of food for the feast at the end. Some worry that the rite is losing its meaning. One man observed bitterly, "People no longer dress up in their best, like for a marriage."

Within the same *kampong*, different family groups celebrate their own pag-umboh at different times so that each family group can participate in the pag-umboh of the others. The poorest families join in celebration with others in their extended family, in this way finding an excuse to justify themselves before Umboh. However, if sickness later comes to their house, they know immediately this is punishment for not having celebrated the Umboh Pai Baha-o in its proper time.

The various ways of celebrating the pag-umboh will eventually be modified. Some traditions will fall into disuse. But the Badjaos will remain deeply tied to their Umboh. He is the most sacred thing they have in their lives: the heart of their religion. They are not purists. They believe in the existence of a sacred power and search for it wherever and however they can. They are open and capable of participating in the cultic activities of both the Muslims and the Christians with sincere devotion. At the same time, they find it incomprehensible and unacceptable that their attachment to Umboh should be questioned. He is their greatest source of sacred power, the primary belief that shapes the meaning of their existence, and the last shore of the Badjao identity.

4

The Spirits of the Dead and Other Minor Spirits

A BADJAO DIES AND IS BURIED. In the grave, the body finds peace, but not the spirit. It lingers where the person was once at home, among familiar places, things, and people. After the funeral, it has to be taken care of.

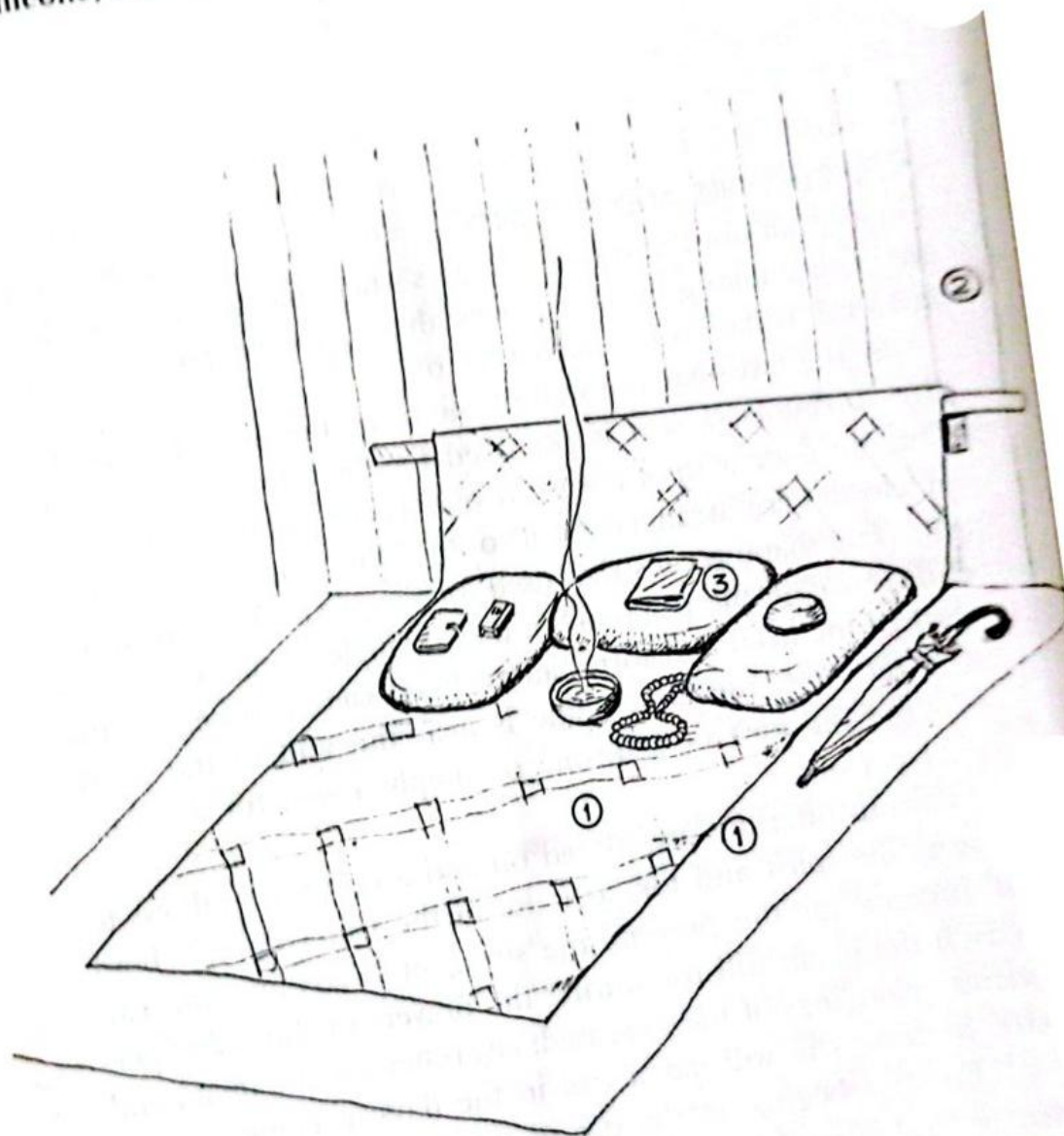
In the hut near the wall of the head, the place favored by the ancestors, a seat is prepared for the spirit of the dead. On the floor a *tepoh* is spread out. Three pillows or bundles of clothes are arranged on it to form three sides of a rectangle. The shape recalls that used for the *pag-umboh*, but with a difference. In the *pag-umboh*, the rectangle opens toward the wall of the head and forms an enclosed sacred space. For the funeral wake, the closed side is near the wall of the head, evoking the idea of a throne or simply a seat for a prominent person.

Various offerings are placed on and around the pillows to honor the spirit and for later use in the ritual wake: a bowl of incense for the prayers; the string of beads and the cap which the imam will use during the prayers of the wake; personal belongings of the deceased; cigarettes for the imam and the persons who will pay a visit in the days to come.

The wake begins on the day of the funeral and continues for several days, depending on the financial resources of the relatives, on family traditions, and on the imam who makes the prayer. The most important activities take place in the evenings, when relatives, friends, and neighbors gather in the

Celebrations with the Sun

hut around the seat of the spirit to "keep him company." The relatives of the dead person offer what they can. This usually includes sweet boiled rice and cigarettes. The visitors, seated on the floor, eat, smoke, talk, play, and enjoy themselves. At times the company can become noisy or even quarrelsome. Often, someone, even the whole group, is thrown out of the house.



Seat of the spirit of the dead. Tepoh enhancing the value of the space (1); wall of the head (2); the seat of the spirit of the dead with personal effects and offerings (3).

The imam takes care of the liturgical aspects and deals directly with the spirit. Each evening when the last light of the day is gone and early in the morning when it is still dark, he visits the seat of the spirit for a short prayer. He seems undisturbed by anything going on around him. In the morning, he enters the hut without asking permission or disturbing the inhabitants who continue sleeping sprawled on the floor. Squatting, with the cap on his head, he presents prayers—some Arabic-like formulae—first with the bowl of smoking incense, and then with the string of beads.

The wake concludes on the proper day, always in the morning before dawn when the spirit of the dead "is brought" to the grave. As he does for the prayers of the wake, the imam celebrates this last event, dramatizing it in his own way. For instance, the imam Jupurani went to take the spirit of Buclawani on the morning of the eighth day after his death. In the hut, everyone was still asleep. Among the offerings for the spirit on the pillows was a white cloth, rolled up with talcum powder inside. After the usual prayer, Jupurani, still kneeling, began to move silently backward toward the door of the hut, dragging the white cloth by its corners and slowly unrolling it on the floor. It was a bit larger than a handkerchief. Near the door, after a short pause of reverent stillness, he folded it delicately as if there was a presence there and picked it up. Then he stood up and walked toward the cemetery.

On Buclawani's grave, a stone had been placed. After a short prayer, Jupurani bent over the stone, opened the cloth and shook it. The talcum powder descended like a small cloud, covering the stone and the surrounding ground in white. A short prayer followed. Then Jupurani folded the cloth, put it in his pocket, and left. With the talcum powder, the spirit of the dead was gently carried to the grave. The funeral wake was over.

The dramatization of the rite reveals a set of concepts worth noting. The spirit of the dead, prisoner of nostalgia, tends to linger in its old dwelling place. With the help of various ritual devices, it is brought to the cemetery, its new home, where its body has already lain for a few days. There, it is hoped, it will find peace and remain. The dwelling place

of the spirit is physically localized in the tombstone, the *sundok*. It is placed on the grave at the place of the head, at the end of the funeral, immediately after the body has been laid in the grave and covered with soil.

The intensity of the desire to put the spirit to rest and the manner in which this is done vary according to place and individual experience. While fishing in the open sea, a young man lost his life. A few days after the funeral, his parents destroyed his boat by sawing it in two. They then put it on the grave. They explained their deed, saying that they did not want "to remember." A few days after, there was another funeral, this time for a teenage girl. Her parents returned a picture of their child to the missionary who had given it to them. Again, the reason for this was that they did not want "to remember."

As already noted, Badjaos do not linger much over things of the past. The past is past, even in the case of a beloved person. In fact, remembering loved ones can become problematic, because the memory itself is understood to be a visit from the spirit of the dead to the minds of those who survive.

All things linked with the dead can evoke memories. These can be personal belongings or his image in a photograph. These objects are discarded in order to send away the spirit that "dwells" or "hides" in them. Obviously, one disposes of them with due respect. The boat mentioned above was destroyed and "returned to its owner" at his grave. Photographs are simply returned to the giver. The most effective method, however, of getting rid of the spirit of the dead always remains a proper ritual wake.

The cultic activities of the wake take place in the dark, in the evening just after sunset and in the morning before sunrise. In order not to disrupt the sense of the dark, one limits the use of artificial lights. For the benefit of visitors, lights are sometimes provided, but care is taken to place them at some distance from the seat of the spirit. Once, in the morning, an imam lighted a candle so that I might be able to see. He placed it behind him, so that his back formed a screen to prevent the light from falling directly on the seat of the spirit. The use of a camera with flash was prohibited.

The darkness of night, symbol of the cosmic night, is the realm of realities with neither form nor consistency, the realm of shadows. In the darkness of night, the spirits of the dead find their substance. By nature, they are susceptible to light. The flash of a camera or light of a candle could irritate them. Like shadows, they disappear with the light of the day. At night they are at home, roaming near the cemeteries or sacred places, passing in the vicinity of the village, and sometimes visiting people.

THE SPIRITS: ONE NAME, DIFFERENT REALITIES

In every religious experience, the power-reality that one encounters always appears as an agent that has something to say. It appears, for example, as an agent which may injure because in some way disrespect was shown. It asks for attention. It asks to be honored in a given place. It asks that some form of ritual be performed for it. It wants rice and banners.

Once the presence of a superhuman agent is recognized, the religious man involved in whatever way in such an experience immediately feels engaged in a relationship or religious dialogue. In this dialogue, he recognizes first of all that a mysterious and awesome agent stands before him: a spiritual agent, or "spirit," gifted among other things with intelligence making it capable of communicating, and with a superior power with which it can hold the human being at its mercy.

After this first recognition, the religious man, in an effort to establish a meaningful relation with this "spirit," feels the need to further identify the personality, if only for the sake of better knowing its wishes and satisfying them. The dialogue with the spirit then develops in symbolic exploration and analogical description.

The model describing the relations with the spirits is deduced from the models of social behavior. One deals with the spirits as one deals with human beings. One asks their permission, begs forgiveness, honors them with offerings, and so forth. The spirits become similar to men. They are "like" men. They can also assume the form of monsters, not so much

because being spiritual one may imagine them as one wishes, but most of all because as "spirits," they remain by nature always different from and superior to humans. In any case, the religious experience, inasmuch as it implies a relation, a dialogue, an exchange, represents a form of personalizing the sacred. The spirit is an agent "like" the human being.

But once the object of the religious experience has received a connotation, is called "spirit," and is imagined "like" a human being, it begins to assume a new existence. It becomes detached, at least in part, from the first experience in which it originally revealed itself, and it develops its attributes starting directly from its derivative called "spirit." Most of the Badjao speculation on the identity and nature of the various spirits starts off directly from this derived concept. As a concept, the term *spirit* has the disadvantage of being only a symbol of an infinitely deeper reality. To this must be added the difficulty with which this generic term is applied to diverse realities. These aspects above all are the source of the confusion related to various spirits.

However, the original religious experience, in which each spirit initially reveals itself, is not completely lost. It remains in the background and keeps its vividness even for the person whose religiosity has become more or less habitual. On this fundamental level, each spirit recaptures its essential characteristics. In order to differentiate among the various spirits, it may be useful at this point to return to that original experience, attempting a short synthesis by describing the three principal groups of Badjao spirits: (1) the great spirits, (2) the spirits of things, and (3) the spirits of the dead.

The great Badjao spirits, Tuhan and the *saitan*, stand out above all others. They are the absolute spirits. The beliefs about these spirits are born from an experience exclusively religious, accessible to every Badjao. By nature, these spirits are wholly different from all that is contingent. Everything depends on them.

Umboh can also be numbered among the great spirits. Though gifted with a nature rich in superlatives and in the

cult usually placed above the saitan, Umboh cannot boast of the absolute features of the saitan. In his relationship with Tuhan, Umboh completely depends on the supreme being. Nevertheless, even in Umboh's case, one can go back to an original experience of a religious kind. But then again, this experience is related to the mystery of life in the world and in society, and it celebrates the sacredness of the origins. Beyond a simple, direct religious experience, the experience of Umboh appears culturally elaborated.

These great spirits can easily be distinguished from the rest of the spirits, all known as *sumangat*, because they each have a name of their own. The *sumangat* can be subdivided into two further groups: the spirits of things in general, and the spirits of the dead.

We have already seen examples of the *sumangat* of things. A coconut intended for the pag-umboh, from the moment it is picked or bought, acquires a special identity; it becomes something special. Better, it acquires a personality and becomes "somebody." Its purpose gives it a significance, activating its "spirit" or *sumangat*. In the same way, the presence of a *sumangat* in rice is recognized not only in the rice for the pag-umboh but also in that of the harvest, and in that which will be used in sowing. *Sumangat* are also seen in the field that receives that rice, as well as in the rats that can destroy it.

It is not correct to think that for the Badjaos all physical realities are animated by a spirit. In theory, all of them can have a spirit. In practice, however, only those that have become in some way significant have a spirit. There is, even here, a "choice." The dialectic that reveals the presence of a spirit in the stone or in the sacred tree is the same dialectic that brings one to recognize a spirit in any given reality.

It may be useful to remember how spirits of this kind can even be removed. When a pag-umboh is postponed, with a prayer and the due permissions, palay and coconut are freed from their *sumangat*. Devoid of special meaning, they return to the ambit of everyday realities and are consumed as ordinary food.

A *sumangat* is not to be confused with a "soul." It is incorrect to conclude that for the Badjaos all physical realities, or even all living things, have a "soul." The concept of soul, as the life principle of things, is not present among the Badjaos. The Badjaos are not very concerned with philosophical concepts. For the Badjaos, things do not have a soul, not even those eventually animated by a spirit. For them, all realities subsist and exist in a given way only because Tuhan sustains them.

Therefore, one cannot say that the Badjaos are "animists." The potential spirit or *sumangat* of a given reality is not to be confused with the "soul." In any case, not all physical realities have a spirit or *sumangat*, not even within the more limited realm of living realities.

The common term *sumangat* is also used for the spirits of the dead. But unique among the various *sumangat*, the spirits of the dead also have another name, and that is *umagad*. This term primarily refers to the "social personality" of an individual. In the local community, each Badjao, even the most humble and insignificant, is always "somebody." Eventually, this social personality will be forcefully revealed by the vacuum created with his departure.

The body may be buried, but the deceased is not really interred: the social personality survives the individual. It continues to live in memory, evoked by the persons and things among which this person lived. This will disappear only with time. A great part of the beliefs about the spirits of the dead can easily be brought back to this original experience. The social personality that is left behind is reified and becomes spirit, the spirit of the dead.

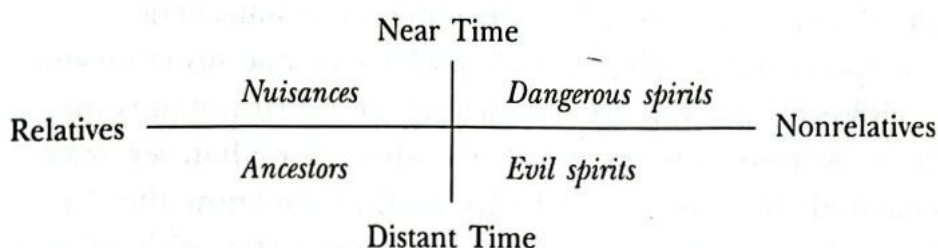
FINAL DESTINY

The netherworld is simply a prolongation of the present life, realized in the realm of the spiritual. It is not retribution. There is no judge who assesses men's deeds and rewards or punishes each according to his merits. This does not mean that the spirits of the dead will all end up in one and the

same pile of faceless beings. There are several paths leading eventually to three different places, and it is ultimately the place that will shape a spirit's existence and personality. From here emerge three groups of spirits who, though they have different names, characters, and behaviors, all remain spirits of the dead.

In the final analysis, those who determine where a spirit is to be found—and therefore decide its destiny—are the living. Not really objectively. Much depends on the relationship that they had with each dead person. Relatives and friends tend to be sympathetic. As time goes by, they will idealize the dead. Nonrelatives, on the other hand, look on the dead with suspicion. They may ultimately judge the dead negatively as truly pernicious agents.

Time and kinship, then, are the two variables that determine the character and destiny of the spirit of the dead.



Bereavement

Death puts the entire village under a taboo. The grand social rites are suspended. The memory of the dead lives on in the minds and conversations of the people. The dead's restless spirit cannot find peace in the difficult days immediately following death.

Like the other spirits, even this spirit is a suprahuman being who possesses the ambiguous power of the sacred realities. It can harm. Its restlessness cannot but create concern. One seeks to restrain its movements. A funeral properly done, followed by an appropriate wake can help a lot in this sense.

Like every other spirit, however, the spirit of the dead remains beyond human control. It will continue to disturb. This is a reality each Badijao is resigned to.

Relatives of the Dead. The bereaved accept all this philosophically. They look at the behavior of their beloved dead with much understanding. They know that down at the cemetery, in the new dwelling place, it can feel uncomfortable. Until it gets accustomed to its new place, it feels lonely, especially in the evening when its loved ones gather in the coziness of their hut. It longs for their company. With them, most of all, it loves to linger. To this restlessness, the relatives of the dead know they are the most vulnerable.

They accept it with a certain trepidation. It is after all a spirit, uncontrollable, unpredictable, often capricious. The spirit might have an account to settle—a disagreement, some small mischief, a painful memory—with any of its relatives. If so, eventually the matter will soon be discovered. For example, if someone gets sick, such potential dissatisfactions easily come to mind, sending one to quickly examine his conscience.

However, the relatives know that the spirit remains one of them. Kinship ties remain. Even when, for whatever reason, somebody at home is hit by its wrath, they know this has its limits. It is assumed that there are limits. The spirit of their dead would never be carried away by blind anger to become pure wickedness. The relatives therefore tend to consider the spirit as basically good.

Goodness, in this case, does not connote an ethical quality, though it could. Some spirits are recognized as "good" because the original persons were meek and good by reputation and would never have harmed anybody. This is how people usually see their own dead.

More often, however, "goodness" simply refers to the fact that the spirit of the dead would not have serious reasons to do evil. Perhaps in life, the person was never seriously wronged. The person had a normal death, nonviolent, at the right age. The funeral rites were done as they should have been. For these and other reasons, the spirit has no reason

to be too disturbed. Were it to decide to visit some of its relatives, it would not choose to strike immediately with sickness. It knows more gentle methods. The most common way is through dreams.

The Badjaos have various explanations for dreams. One is that dream images are the spirits of the things or persons dreamed of. Moved by intense desires, these spirits temporarily leave their natural seats and visit places, things, and persons they like. For example, the image of a loved one in a dream is none other than that loved one's spirit come for a visit. This spirit can leave "itself" during the day, in a moment of distraction. More easily it does this at night when, in deep sleep, its person cannot notice the escapades of his or her own spirit. With due distinctions made, the same is true for the spirits of the dead.

A good spirit visits its loved ones for a variety of reasons. Sometimes it is only to help them remember. It wants to remain in their thoughts. At other times it appears to reproach them for neglecting or even forgetting. In this case, it might give them a gentle lesson through a light illness. It could also return to present a request or to satisfy some of its personal needs. The spirits of the dead can get hungry or thirsty. When this happens, a spirit might enter the body of a sleeping person, descend to the stomach, and feed itself on the food found there. These escapades can be detected if the sleeper sees the spirit in a dream.

Spirits with better manners ask that food or drink be presented to them ritually. The *pakan sumangat* is the simplest rite for this. As the name suggests, it takes the form of a meal to "feed the spirit" of the dead. In exceptional cases, it can take place on the tomb of the dead. Usually it is celebrated at home. The food consists mainly of rice that has been boiled, colored, and mashed into cakes. Sugar, coffee, cigarettes, and other items can be added. Everything is presented on a tepoh at the center of the hut. The elder of the family or an imam prays, speaks to the spirit, and explains why an offering is being made. He assures it that it has not been forgotten. He asks it to calm down and stop disturbing

them. Finally, the offerings are divided and consumed among those present.

One of the most serious reasons for a spirit's restlessness is that the funeral rites were not properly done. This belief is found not only among the Badjaos but also more widely among the neighboring population. The blame is always placed on the imam who presided over the rites. In some way, the rites must be performed again, often by a new imam more competent and powerful than the first. The liturgical action is celebrated on the grave. The ritual washing of the body is repeated, by washing the *sundok* or pouring water on the grave.

All rites, even the simplest, cost money, something the Badjaos have little of. If their beloved dead is too restless, it can become a great nuisance to those left behind. Some of them may even come to the point of being unable to hide their irritation: "I did all that could be done. I have done the funeral, the wake, the pakan sumangat, and still it continues to disturb us. I am really fed up. What does it expect from us?" With the spirits of their own dead, the living can become impatient and even critical. This freedom is indicative of a confidence possible when one knows that the spirit will not go beyond a certain limit. This, because the spirit is recognized basically as "good." Certainly, without this confidence, one would not take such liberties:

Nonrelatives and the Spirits of the Dead. Unlike the kin, those unrelated to the dead are generally unsympathetic with its spirit. The spirit of the recently deceased generates only fears and worries. All Badjaos know that the spirit is particularly restless during the days right after death. They know how difficult it is to remain in the grave. One can easily meet it, particularly in the vicinity of the cemetery or its old hut. But it may be found anywhere. Like all spirits, it does not know space limitations; it can move freely and be met in the most unexpected places.

Unhappiness is the cause of its restlessness, and unhappiness can turn to envy at the sight of those still in the world of the living. For the nonrelatives, nothing good can come from an encounter with this spirit. They cannot rely on the

bond of kinship that protects the relatives from angry manifestations of his suprahuman power.

Precautions are always taken when one must pass in the vicinity of the house or the grave of the recently dead. Badjaos try "to pass unnoticed" or introduce themselves with a greeting and a request for permission to pass. Still, these places always remain dangerous, though they are not the only places where the spirit of the dead can be found.

As with other evil spirits, the presence of the spirit of the dead is sometimes noticed by its smell, described by some as the "smell of medicine" or the "smell of sweet leaves" or the smell of the corpse before it was washed. This is an emblematic comparison. It not only describes a sensory experience, but suggests also a character description. This particular spirit is suspected as dangerous even before any negative experience. The smell even hints at its character. Such a spirit is as dangerous as the spirit of one whose funeral rites were not performed well.

When a sudden gust of wind brings the "smell of medicine," a shiver passes through the village. Everybody goes home. Doors and windows are shut. A dangerous spirit of the dead is passing by. It can do harm. "It happened right here with us," I was told. "In far-off Bilatan, an old man died. He belonged to one of our families. That night the smell of sweet leaves passed through the village. A child was taken by that smell and immediately died. As you see, we have had experience. . . ."

But a harmful spirit can also move around without a smell, so everyone remains basically vulnerable, especially the weak and the sick. For this reason, when in the village someone dies, the sick person protects himself against possible attacks of the spirit by painting himself with the traditional white substance, usually a mixture with a rice powder base. Bands are drawn around the wrists and ankles, and perhaps even around the neck and on the forehead.

There are no better solutions. The nonrelative has no specific rites such as the pakan sumangat, with which he can host or pacify the spirit of the dead. One can only avoid it as much as possible. In the mind of a nonrelative, though the spirit

of a person who died recently may not yet be a harmful *ayem*; it is on the way to becoming one.

After Bereavement

Life returns to normal after the time of bereavement. The village comes out of the experience of death. The social personality of the dead fades, and its spirit begins on one of three paths to a final destination. Except for those who become "ancestors," the spirit of the deceased descends into a sort of limbo, where it eventually loses its identity. This is a second death, after the physical, when the spirit loses its individuality. Deprived of its identity, it joins one of two groups of spirits known generically as "good spirits" or "bad spirits." The ancestors take a third and quite different path.

Good Spirits at Rest with Tuhan. The relatives believe the spirits of their dead—young or old, those who died violently or peacefully—all find peace over time. After overcoming the nostalgia of the first days, they free themselves from restlessness and enter into eternal rest. They become peaceful or, as it is said, "good."

The ephemeral existence of these spirits is at times described as a "life with Tuhan." The Badjaos say that "the good spirits"—those whose funeral was done properly—"go to live with Tuhan." As we will see below, these images are half of a symmetry that predicates the existence of the "evil" spirits with the saitan.

Good spirits — with —→ Tuhan

Evil spirits — with —→ Saitans

Life with Tuhan can be interpreted as an eternal blessedness or paradise, though not necessarily in reward for a life well lived. As we have already noted, some Badjaos speak of a place called *surgah* as heaven or life with Tuhan. These ideas have potential for development.

In practice, the Badjaos develop this image on the theme of peacefulness. This is that peacefulness which characterizes the "good spirits," those who leave behind their initial restlessness, withdraw from human society, and enter into an irenic state, similar to Tuhan's. These spirits go to live "with Tuhan."

From these images, one can postulate two corollaries. First, the attributes of Tuhan are transferred to these spirits. Unlike the saitan, Tuhan is essentially good. He uses his power sensibly, not disturbing or harming. Similarly, the good spirits of the dead are sensible. They do not cause needless disturbances or harm.

The second and less flattering corollary suggests that goodness is a euphemism that extols the absence of the spirit and leads to a justification for its being forgotten among the relatives. As a matter of fact, like Tuhan, the good spirits withdraw into their own world and become unconcerned about their relatives. This situation is not displeasing to the relatives, who reciprocate. In the Badjao cultic activities, there is no specific rite for these spirits. Like Tuhan, the good spirits do not need to be appeased.

The Ancestors. To the general rule, some spirits stand as exceptions. They are described as good primarily because, like the spirits just described, they are spirits of one's kin. They differ, however, because they are not forgotten. They keep their names and identities and stand out from the anonymous crowd of those who are generically categorized as good spirits. These are the spirits of the "ancestors."

The historical memory of the Badjaos keeps the names and deeds of various ancestors alive, but this generally does not reach beyond the past two generations. History stops there. Beyond that, it is "zero zero," as the Badjaos say, meaning that they do not remember and do not know. They associate ancestors with various family groups, but without concern for genealogy. They freely pick from among the persons who lived in the past. They remember them for their personal merits, perhaps as a powerful imam, a respected leader, a much loved person, a famous craftsman, etc. These are the famous relatives.

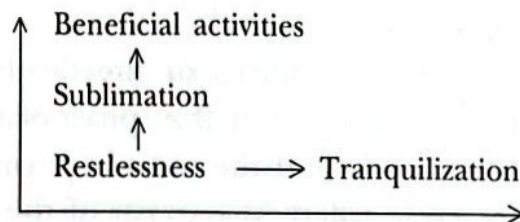
Spirits of historical relevance are also attributed with a *certain* vivacity. They are active spirits. From time to time they visit their relatives for the usual reasons, such as physical needs or the wish to be remembered. Or it may be for a loftier aim, such as an urgent reminder to respect the traditional ways of life. Their goodness does not suggest a wish to forget.

They are usually associated with Umboh and take on the name of *umboh* as a title, such as Umboh Andas, Umboh Abadda, Umboh Sanno and so on. Each family has one or more *umboh*. It is mostly in this context that the various ancestors find their ultimate worth. Like Umboh, they are mediators and are *seen* as beneficent powers who protect and nurture life. They are good because, like the great ancestor Umboh, these lesser ancestors do good works. They are friendly spirits.

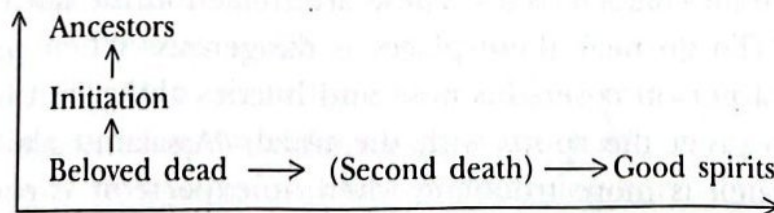
As such, they are dear and occupy a unique place in the Badjao rituals. They are honored and frequently invoked, primarily with specific rites—rites that usually leave much room for creativity. These can range from the more liturgical forms, like the pakan sumangat, to the more practical forms, like a prayer at the grave of one's parents before departing for a long journey. Even in the humblest of these rites, the Badjao never fails to also honor and invoke Tuhan and Umboh. Then, along with Tuhan—who does not have a proper ritual—the ancestors are invoked even in the rites pertaining to other spirits, such as the pag-umbuh or visits at the seats of the saitan.

The spirits of the ancestors can even become incarnated. They can "take up residence" within some living person. Here, their power sanctions social status and roles, arts and traditions in the village. These are not reincarnations. Badjaos do not believe in a reincarnation where the spirit of every person, freed in death, passes on to another person. For the Badjaos, the spirits who dwell in certain persons are not simply the spirits of the dead—realities still pertaining to the human order. Rather they are superior spirits—sacred realities belonging to the suprahuman order of the great spirits. They are the *umboh* spirits.

Their superiority implies a distinction and separation from the "good spirits" of the dead. The good spirits become good as their restlessness subsides over time and they gradually find eternal rest. For them, a slow second death is affirmed. In contrast, the ancestors are benevolently alive. This benevolent activity is in direct contrast to their original fearsome restlessness and does not suggest a logical progression from one state to the other.



Thus, the ancestor reveals a personality radically different from that manifested during the days soon after death. Between the two different states, there is a gap that has to be bridged. The hypothesis presented in chapter 3, called "the initiation rite of the ancestors," can explain the process through which the spirit of a beloved dead becomes an umboh. This hypothesis is rarely given conceptualization among the Badjaos. And perhaps it must be so. Were this process accessible to human investigation, the idealization of the ancestor would be weakened. Held in mystery, it appears with a personality, vigorously polarized in a suprahuman world. The features of its contingent past are no longer recognizable. The ancestor is a unique sacred reality.



Evil Spirits and the Saitan. As mentioned above, outside the realm of kinship, the spirit of a dead person does not find much understanding. Lack of sympathy tends to proceed to social condemnation.

Its second death awaits. The nonrelatives are the first ones to forget. As time goes by, the memory of this or that particular dead person becomes obscure, until it is completely blurred. Its individuality finally fades away. The spirit becomes anonymous, lost in the assembly of the spirits generically known, this time, as "evil."

Other spirits besides the spirits of the dead are also included among the evil spirits, but the spirits of the dead are the most easily identifiable and the most important. At times, the evil spirits are even called "the spirits of the dead." They are the part that stand for the whole. Here, obviously, the good spirits are not included, much less the spirits of the ancestors.

These "spirits of the dead" are evil because, unlike the good spirits, they remain active. This activity is a prolongation of the restlessness that torments every dead person on the days soon after death, only worse. It is more irrational, more whimsical, more vicious; in short, more dangerous. But there is no break in continuity. These spirits, in fact, are none other than the spirits of the dead who for one reason or another have not found and will never find peace. Excluded from eternal rest, they are condemned to remain restless for all eternity.

That there is no break in continuity can be noted also from the fact that they can emanate the same smell of the recently deceased, the well-known smell of sweet leaves. Certain places, like a cemetery or garbage dump, can have it as one of their permanent characteristics. These are treated as the lair of evil spirits. To go near these places is dangerous. When passing them, a person covers his nose and hurries along, not forgetting to greet the spirits with the usual, "Assalamu alaikum." This smell is more troubling when, unexpectedly carried by the wind, it wafts through the village, taking people by surprise. It can arrive by day, but it is more often noticed in the evening and during the night.

The night is the dwelling place of the darkness and the place where the spirits meet. Here the spirits of the dead are at home. They find it the most favorable time to move and go about undisturbed among human beings. They can do this without necessarily bringing that smell of sweet leaves that betrays their presence. They remain basically spirits: unpredictable.

They are also why for the Badjao the night is dangerous. A pregnant woman should not go out unnecessarily at night. If she cannot avoid it, she should at least wear dark clothes in order to pass by unnoticed. Otherwise "she might encounter an envious spirit that, in noticing her, could address her. Then something might happen to her child. It could be born abnormal." At night, special precautions are also taken for childbirth. Every *panday* knows a specific repertory of prayers, useful for defending the newborn from the envy of and possible attacks from evil spirits. These evil spirits also attack the sick. They can come from the sea, and from under the hut.

As a symbol, the night assumes moral connotations. It becomes synonymous with evil. The evil spirits love the night because their thoughts are dark and their actions are evil. Consequently one cannot help regarding with suspicion the spirits who love the night: "Decent people do not go around at night." All the spirits of the recently deceased love the night. Potentially they are all dangerous. But those who choose the night as their permanent dwelling cannot but be evil. Death is the ultimate symbol of the night's negativity. Thus, in every respect, the spirits of the deceased who become spirits of the night become, as seen above, the "spirits of the dead" or "evil spirits."

A more philosophical reflection on the personality and nature of these spirits leads the Badjao to consider the problem of evil. Only wickedness can explain evil as such. The great spirits are powerful enough to do harm, but more often this is seen as painful but always loving correction. They are never accused of wickedness. Only the evil spirits can perpetrate evil. Indeed, were they not existent, these spirits would have to be invented.

Sometimes they are associated with the *saitan*. "The evil spirits, the ones that did not have a proper funeral, end up with the *saitan*." Saying this, the Badjaos even point out the place where these spirits go. With a glance and a wink, they indicate the sacred trees or rocks where the *saitan* reside. In a still more daring image, it is at times stated that when they move, the spirits of the dead "are carried around by the *saitan*."

For the Badjaos, the dwelling place of the spirits of the dead is the cemetery, at the grave where their bodies rest. When the spirits go around and make trouble, they temporarily leave that dwelling place. The images suggested by this belief appear difficult to reconcile with the images of a simultaneous residence somewhere else—in the sacred rocks or trees of the *saitan*. These are physically distinct places that presuppose ubiquity. In the Badjao thought, however, this is possible. After all, the spirits of the dead, like all spirits, are as the wind.

"Life with Tuhan" may hint at the idea of a Badjao paradise, but it does not suggest its opposite. Badjao eschatology does not know hell, or at least an antithesis of the same order as "life with Tuhan." The belief about *narkah* does not have serious relevance. Two aspects of the "life with the *saitan*" prevent an eschatological parallelism. First, the *saitan* are absolute spirits. In some ways, they live and share in the existence of Tuhan. They are not the contingent spirits which, in other religions, are described as "devils" and seen as the administrators of the so-called "hell." Second, the dwelling places of the *saitan*, strictly speaking, are not a "hell." They are not in fact a reality of the netherworld—a metaphysical reality as the Badjao paradise would be. On the contrary, they are in this world and pertain to this world. They reveal the concreteness of the realities of this world.

Implicit in the image of a life with the *saitan* is the idea of an unhappy existence. In fact, the spirits that meet at the seats of the *saitan* are the spirits who did not succeed in passing over to the hereafter and have not reached their desired goal: eternal rest. Lingering in the here and now is consistent with the idea of a funeral not properly done and above

all with the idea of an unburied body. As long as this remains among the living, the spirit will never leave this world. These situations in which the spirits of the dead, through no fault of their own, find themselves prisoners, can be read as a condition of punishment. The evil spirits are the spirits of the dead condemned to remain with human beings. Only in this sense can one speak of a "hell."

More important for Badjao thought is what is implied in the image of a life with the saitan. From this image can be derived an analogy that describes with unique effectiveness a spiritual place fitting for the personality and the character of the bad spirits of the dead. The saitan are sacred powers. By definition, they are ambivalent. They can help as well as harm, and they are uncontrollable, unpredictable, and whimsical. In the end, they always make a nice mess. The bad spirits of the dead, by nature restless and dangerous, find their most congenial dwelling place with the saitan, a dwelling place that reflects, in a particular way, their mode of being.

Saitan are superior and eternal spirits. Even their seats indicate this. The spirits of the dead on the other hand are simple sumangat, inferior and contingent spirits. In concert with the saitan, the bad spirits of the dead clothe themselves in suprahuman powers. Carried around by the saitan, they become a bit like the saitan, assuming a more sacred dimension. They become a permanent figure in the Badjao pneumatology. No longer spirits generically called evil, they become *the* evil spirits, the spirits that, without rest, wander through the world to do harm.

From the association between the saitan and the evil spirits, the saitan come out the losers. Even though saitan will never become truly evil spirits, of their ambivalence one perceives and emphasizes the negative side. Wickedness can only be ascribed to inferior and contingent spirits, like the evil spirits of the dead who, though sublimated by association with the saitan, primarily remain always human realities.

Reading the Fear. It is the dead of night. The village is covered with darkness. With Nurkisa I sit outside, in front of the

hut. From inside, somebody calls us to come in and starts closing the doors and windows. In the huts nearby, *our* neighbors do the same. A spirit is passing by. Early in the afternoon, they had buried a child. "Don't you sense this smell of medicine, as of sweet leaves?" Nurkisa asks. "When Badjaos sense this smell, they know that a saitan is passing by. The smell comes not from the saitan, but from the spirit of the child we buried. We believe that a saitan is bringing it around."

Nurkisa insists that I go in. I answer that if she wants she can go in, but I prefer to stay outside. "If you remain outside, I will also stay." She helps her mother close the last windows and returns to sit nearby. "Alone," she explains, "I would be afraid, but if there is somebody who is more courageous than I, I am not afraid to stay."

She is afraid that the spirit of the child might harm her. It is not fear of the saitan. To make it clearer, she explains that she fears the saitan, but immediately adds, "But I have respect for the saitan. It is not the saitan that we Badjaos are afraid of, but evil spirits." Only in the case of the saitan can one speak of a sacred danger. In the case of the evil spirits, one cannot speak of danger in this sense but rather of wickedness. They cause fear, because they are the quintessence of evil.

But this wickedness, though vicious and dangerous, remains in a sense "not divine." Even as the evil spirits always remain of human origin, so also does their wickedness. Were this wickedness divine, it would cause fear of a different measure, even with a more courageous person close by.

Among the Badjaos, then, there are clearly two kinds of fear, completely different from each other. Indirectly, they reveal the radical difference between the spirits in question. "Religious fear" is the uneasiness and awe that the religious man feels in the presence of the great sacred realities—Tuhan, a saitan, or Umboh. Before these realities, the Badjaos acknowledge themselves as creatures, fragile and dependent.

The other fear, "human fear," is akin to cowardice or timidity. It can be fear of enemies, of rats, of the dark, of the *sumangat* of the dead, or of any other frightening "human reality."

OTHER SPIRITS

Even among the Badjaos, one can find fantastic creatures—white ladies, strange lights, dead persons who walk, monsters with deformed bodies or ugly faces or missing joints, and so forth. They are all spirits and they usually appear at night. By day they prefer to assume the form of an animal like a bird or a dog. They can be heard without being seen, as whispers from the thick of the forest or wailings in places where somebody was killed. They make up a world where popular fantasy goes its own way with great liberty. Perhaps because there are no more appropriate terms, they are all grouped under the name *sumangat*. This can be confusing to a non-Badjao, who might be tempted to mistake them for more important spirits. To these images and to the beliefs that sustain them, Badjaos give only as much credibility as they would receive even in other societies, modern ones included.

More significant among the minor spirits are the so-called djins—not to be confused with the djins (same name) or ancestors dwelling in chosen persons, which will be spoken of in the next chapter. They are usually grouped with the evil spirits. Precisely what these beings are is difficult to say. Faith in their existence seems to go back to Islamic tradition and folklore where the djins appear like creatures with ethereal and invisible bodies, molded from a fire without smoke. Intelligent and rebellious, they behave in a rather hostile way toward human beings.

Among the Badjaos, their identity is vague. Each person imagines them as he or she wants. What is known is that they are not human spirits. They are not, then, to be confused with the spirits of the dead. It seems they ought to be ontologically higher. Little else can be said of their personalities. They do not seem to have a specific function. They neither have a history nor a mythology that qualifies them. They are simply recognized as evil spirits because they are dangerous and harmful.

More definitive is the context in which they are found. They are found at the seats of the saitan. There could be a

theological echo in this association. In some Islamic traditions, the djins are related to Saytan. The connection carries greater weight for the Badjaos and implies important similarities between these spirits and their saitan. As in the case of the evil spirits of the dead, the character of the saitan becomes the analogy that shapes the background of their own character.

They move about but not to the extent that evil spirits of the dead do. Normally, they remain where they are found. In a sense they color the seats of the saitan and render them slightly more dangerous—but not so much. Once, before trimming a sacred tree, a missionary asked the Badjaos for an opinion. They said it was a tree particularly full of djins. They themselves did not have the courage to touch it. But if the missionary was not afraid, it was no doubt because he was stronger, they said, and he could cut the tree as much as he wanted.

5

The Chosen Persons

SOME SPIRITS TAKE UP RESIDENCE within persons. As a consequence, the latter assume a new personality. They become, and are called in the Badjao language, "djín." One says, for example, "Maharati is a djín."

As already seen, *djín* is also the common name of those unpredictable, uncontrollable, and dangerous spirits, mentioned in the preceding chapter, that like to dwell with the *saitan*. We shall therefore avoid using the term *djín*, which subsequently will be reserved to describe the spirits associated with the *saitan*.

The term *djín* as discussed in this chapter can assume different meanings. Ordinarily, it describes the whole being, consisting of the person and the spirit the person bears. At other times, it is used to refer solely to the person and at times only to the spirit. For clarity, I have devised the terms *djín-bearer* and *djín-spirit*, as the case may be.

DJIN-SPIRITS

As we will see, the djins associated with the *saitan* are among the spirits that take up residence within a person, but these are neither the only nor the most important spirits that do so. As a matter of fact, the majority of the spirits that incarnate in persons are the spirits of the ancestors. As already observed, these are called *umboh*. In everyday Badjao language,

however, the terms for "ancestor" and *umboh* tend to be replaced by *djin* which, in our accepted meaning, is generically called "djin-spirit."

A dead person becomes an ancestor only to the extent that that person is remembered. With the Badjaos this historical memory seems not to go back very far. There are few ancestors remembered by name. Among those who are, only those who have become djin-spirits are honored in practice. Thus, the djin-bearer becomes a living memory. Without the djin-bearer, the memory of the dead would dissipate and the name of the dead would fall into nothingness.

The Ancestor Becomes Djín-spirit

In the course of life, people leave their imprint on things and persons with whom they entertain a relationship. In particular, they stamp something of their personality on their personal belongings and on those persons who are closest to them. The effect of this imprint can easily be detected in the days immediately following a person's death. Things and persons close to that person carry in them, at least for some time, the spirit of the departed.

As already seen, the relatives of the dead sometimes discard everything that evokes remembrance. In the recall, the spirit of the dead becomes present and is not always appreciated. At other times though, things and particularly persons who evoke memories of the dead become useful as means to honor the spirit. This belief can be observed in some of the ritual activities that take place beside the body of the dead.

In one example, during the funeral rites for a young married man, after the ablutions and the arrangement of the corpse, his spirit was honored with offerings of rice made to his mourning father and widow. Seated beside the body, the father first received a bowl of rice from his daughter-in-law. After the father, the widow herself received a bowl of rice, this time from her mother-in-law. In both cases, the offerings were directed to the dead. The persons who were closest to him and therefore most touched by his presence became the medium for communicating with him.

Through him in life, these persons took on a role: father, mother, wife, or in-law. The simple ceremony of the offerings confirmed that, beyond the rite, the dead would continue to live and be honored in the measure that those relationships were respected. The widowed wife honored the spirit of her husband by respecting his old father. In their turn, the parents of the dead honored him by sustaining their daughter-in-law, as if she were still the wife of their son. In this way, they carried in themselves something of the dead.

A djin-spirit is not to be confused with the "sign" of a social personality. It is an individualized reality that only one person can claim to be the bearer of. But the process by which a djin-spirit chooses and "enters" a person, to be understood correctly, must be seen in the context of the formation of the social personality of the individual.

A djin-spirit does not randomly take up residence in any person. The djin-bearer could never be a stranger. He or she could be a relative or friend who had a particular relationship with the donor of the djin-spirit, one who grieved at the death of the beloved person. The djin-bearer may be someone who has difficulty accepting the loss and may frequently see the dead person in dreams.

Before receiving the djin-spirit, the future djin-bearer carries the "signs" of the social personality of the dead. The djin-bearer will not only be the one to carry these signs; but also, among all the marked persons, the one who can boast of a particularly significant relationship with the deceased. The djin-bearer could be the son who bears the most remarkable resemblance to his late father, or the one who succeeds the father in the role of heading the family. The djin-bearer could be the deceased mother's favorite daughter, or the young imam to whom the late master-imam taught the art of prayer, or the young *panday* who learned the secrets for assisting at birth from her dead teacher-panday. The bearer of a djin-spirit is in a certain sense predestined.

A person is often recognized as the future bearer of a specific djin-spirit, even before the djin-spirit is available. Perhaps

the donor is still alive. For example, the people were saying with some certainty that five-year old Sanno would surely receive the djin-spirit of his grandmother Karumarga. At the time, Karumarga was still alive and perfectly healthy. The people foresaw this because of the special relationship between the two. For one, they had exceptionally similar features. Sanno's eyes were exactly the eyes of his grandmother and he had her high, broad forehead. The similarities in character were also impressive. Sanno was an extroverted child, very whimsical, and easily angered, "just like the grandmother." Most striking was the special affection that existed between the two. Sanno loved his grandmother very much, and she loved him more than all her other grandchildren. She liked to keep him nearby during the day, and in the evening she was the one who put him to bed. She cared for him when he was sick. She jealously protected him and defended him against all, adults or children, who could do him harm. It was foreseen that the grandmother could not help but stay close to him always. When she could no longer do so physically, she would do so spiritually.

These forecasts ratify far in advance what later happens. In the final analysis, the selection is made not by the djin-spirit, but by the people themselves. Sanno was not just an ordinary child. He was the grandchild of Karumarga. His relationship with his grandmother would continue to mark him in the future. Along with her physical traits, he would bear in himself her spiritual traits.

The settling in of the djin-spirit in a person does not take anyone by surprise. One simply observes the relationships that link a probable djin-donor to a potential djin-bearer. These ties will be the basis for the recognition of a person as djin-bearer.

In the light of these observations, one can better understand the statement that a djin-spirit enters a person "at the moment of birth." One should not see in this the idea of a soul wandering and waiting to enter a newborn to give itself life again. As we have already seen, the Badjaos do not believe in souls or reincarnation.

The statement is a convenience when no other specific moment or significant event can be used as an explanation for the choice of a djin-bearer. In almost all instances when this statement is cited, if one looks back, one can easily discover that at the moment of birth of the (future) djin-bearer, the donor of the djin-spirit was still alive. Frequently, in fact, the donor is one of the parents of the newborn child.

The use of "the moment of birth" as an explanation ultimately shows that the entry of a djin-spirit into its bearer can be a nonevent. Usually, the djin-spirit descends and settles very discreetly. It is a "choice" that slowly matures in time and is finally given public acknowledgment only when the death of the donor frees it.

At other times, the entrance of a djin-spirit is indicated in dreams. For the Badjaos, the images of persons that appear in a dream are the spirits of persons who visit the dreamer. They may just be passing through; or they may stay, making the dreamer the dwelling place of the djin-spirit.

Bunga Lundin is one of the rare men who can claim to be a panday. He began practicing only when he was already old. He had no formal training at all. As he says, he became a panday automatically at the death of his grandmother, who had also been a panday. At that very moment, he received her *barakat*.

He discovered his late vocation when a young woman was about to give birth and the only panday in the village refused to assist her because of family conflicts. Known as the grandson of the dead panday, Bunga Lundin was then sent for. Because he had grown up living with her, it was thought that he might know something about childbirth. He tried his skills for the first time and the birth went well. From then on, the people began to acknowledge him as a panday.

As Bunga Lundin himself claims, the night before that first experience in assisting in childbirth, his grandmother appeared in a dream and taught him the art of the panday. His grandmother's death had taken place around a year before. Quite some time had passed, therefore, between then and the day Bunga Lundin received his grandmother's *barakat*. During that period, no one, not even himself, had ever considered him to be a panday.

The dream's potential should not be underestimated. *For* the Badjaos, dreams can be real revelations. Notwithstanding this, in Bunga Lundin's case, the dream could at the *moment* have become useful only to him. It could have given him the personal confidence to test abilities he had not known he had.

For the people, however, his panday abilities, up to then unknown, were called into play and revealed for the first time in an emergency. Bunga Lundin was called on primarily because he was known as "the grandson of the old panday." Then, if he was recognized as a panday thereafter, this was for the same reason, which of course was strengthened by his success. For the people, most certainly it was not the dream that confirmed his professional ability, but rather his ability that confirmed the dream's vision that he could be the bearer of his grandmother's djin.

The idea of the dream appears to be a more logical explanation than the one of the moment of birth. But for the Badjaos, it is not the logical necessity that gives importance to the theory of the dream. The Badjaos do not care much about "how" a djin-spirit may come to dwell in a person. Statements on the subject are not binding answers to questions rather abstruse for the Badjaos. They appear rather as retrospective accounts, articulated in a stereotyped manner. Both the idea of the dream and the theory of the moment of birth eventually appear useful inasmuch as they corroborate the faith of those who already believe in the presence of a djin-spirit in a person. This faith comes forward each time as a collective conviction that matures slowly and is finally recognized and accepted as a fact.

The Power of the Djin-spirit

The djin-spirit is endowed with a power that carries all the connotations of the sacred power. One usually qualifies this by saying that this power is not equal to that of Tuhan. For the Badjaos, who are not prone to make subtle conceptual distinctions, an equality here would endanger the absolute superiority of Tuhan. Like the power of Tuhan, however, even the power of the djin-spirit is called "barakat" and is described as having

supernatural properties. It is more than the ordinary power of the spirits of the dead, and certainly more than that of humans.

The strong personalization of the djin-spirit can allow a distinction between the spirit and its power. As we have just seen in the case of Bunga Lundin, this can reach the point of allowing that the power can enter a person before the spirit that owns it. Spirit and power, however, are not two separable entities. Only Tuhan can give barakat to a person without getting involved. His dwelling place remains always in heaven. A djin-spirit, on the other hand, gives his barakat to a person by entering him. Djin-spirit and power in this sense are one and the same.

Bearers of djin-spirits, therefore, should not be seen just as clones. They are not just the "living memory" of a dead person. They carry within themselves a personalized power. This is not limited to cognitive powers of foreknowledge, interpretation, or revelation. This power also defines itself as a sacred energy that completes and elevates the potentialities of the djin-bearer, and enables him or her to perform activities that would not be possible for a normal person. This is what most distinguishes the djin-bearer.

Like every sacred power, the djin-spirit is also ambivalent: it can be dangerous as well as helpful. This presents those who interact with the djin-spirit with a complex and difficult relationship. A relationship described as of *pag-addat* or respect, and developed in terms of "distance." For its physicality, this relationship evokes that with the *saitan*. With the *saitan*, however, the concept of *pag-addat* is articulated almost exclusively in terms of spatial distance. The case of the djin-spirits is more complicated because they are present in an array of bearers who hold various statuses or social roles. The *pag-addat* towards them also requires social distance.

PAG-ADDAT FOR DJIN-SPIRITS AND TRADITION

The loftiest expression of respect for the djin-spirit is found in ritual activity. Though a djin-spirit—perceived as *umboh*-spirit, can be named, honored, and invoked in the course of a *pag-umboh*, this is not its proper rite. The *pag-umboh* is the

Umboh's own rite. The specific rite for the djin-spirit is the so-called "prayer with oil and incense." Here, the whole liturgy takes place around the djin-bearer.

The oil is carefully prepared from copra extracted from a mature coconut. The copra is grated and pressed and the juice is boiled slowly until the oil is extracted. What is now needed for the rite is kept in a bottle for future liturgical or paraliturgical anointing. Every conscientious elder always keeps a bottle of this oil on hand.

As the time for the ceremony approaches, the relatives gather and squat around the djin-bearer, with the leader of the ritual in front. First, he prays over a bowl of incense and then moves it in circles over the head of the person at the center of the rite. He then takes the oil, pours it in his hands, and wipes it on the head of the djin-bearer. As he does this, he and the others recite Arabic-sounding formulae. The leader speaks to the djin-spirit, explaining the reasons for the rite and asking for help.

It must not be forgotten that these spirits, before being "djin," are umboh. The prayer addressed to the djin-spirit therefore is presented as a variation of the prayers that are addressed to the ancestors. In the concept of "ancestors," both Umboh and the minor umboh are included. In this prayer, as in the pag-umboh, the invocation easily moves from one spirit to another, even when ritual attention is focused on a specific ancestor or djin-spirit.

The prayer with oil and incense is the most appropriate cultic form, but the religious imagination knows no limits. Once, for example, I noticed that in the corner of a hut there were banners, small bottles of perfume, a bowl with incense ashes, and talcum powder strewn on the floor. These are the offerings usually presented to the saitan at their seats. In this case, they had been presented to the djin-spirit of a person who lived in that hut. Someone who had shown disrespect had gotten sick, and the relatives went there to apologize and pray before that djin-bearer.

The "prayer with oil and incense" is a minor rite. There seems to be no great concern for space and time, as is the

case with the grand rites like the *pag-umboh* or others that will be described later. The "prayer with oil and incense" can theoretically be celebrated in any place and at any time. In practice, this celebration unfolds in a setting infused with traditionalist concerns that reinforce the traditional concepts of Badjao life.

Tiga carried in herself the *djin*-spirit of her father-in-law, Andas. In life, Andas had held Tiga in profoundest esteem and affection, and the people said then that Tiga would receive the spirit of her father-in-law. Not too long after the death of Andas, Tiga was automatically recognized as a bearer of his *djin*-spirit. One day Tiga fell sick. One diagnosis suggested that the cause of the sickness was a deterioration in her relationship with her *djin*-spirit, Andas. Andas definitely loved Tiga, but he loved her as she had been in the past. Tiga had since allowed some changes in her life to take place.

Tiga had moved with her family into a new hut. The old dwelling place, with the roof and walls of *nipa*, was very sober and bare. The new one had wooden walls and a galvanized roof. As if this were not enough, pictures and decorations of all sorts had been hung on the walls. Worst of all, the old hut was left to fall into ruin. This was the clearest expression of her break with the past and her disregard for the life it represented.

Thinking that a return to the old way of living should be enough to appease Andas's *djin*-spirit, Tiga removed the decorations in her new hut and celebrated a *pag-umboh*—but to no effect. It was soon clear that it was useless for her to resist. *Umboh* was saying clearly that Tiga as *djin*-bearer should have gone back to live in the old hut. Andas had lived there and could only be at home there. There in the old dwelling place *Umboh* would also have released his regenerating forces. *Umboh* and the *Umboh* Andas were in complete agreement. In response, she promised to return to the old hut once she could find the money needed to buy poles and *nipa* to restore the old dwelling place.

Tiga's first ritual step to soothe Andas was to restore her old self. She had to redo her clothes and hairstyle and makeup in the old way that had been so pleasing to him.

"Andas loved black. When he was alive he always dressed in black." Tiga, therefore, during the time she lived in Andas's household, had always been careful to wear something black. In this she had been faultless. But clothes get old and with them the ideal model deteriorates. Tiga's black clothes now have to be renewed from time to time. Once, to replace her faded black shorts, Tiga sewed a new pair.

Andas had also liked Tiga with her hair pigtailed at the back, with bangs on her forehead. Since the time of Andas, Tiga never changed her hairdo. But even this has to be renewed from time to time. Not only because hair grows longer, but also because a hairdo could slowly change over time.

The rite in honor of the djin-spirit of Andas was begun by addressing these concerns. When everything was ready and the relatives were gathered in the hut, Tiga, wrapped in a hōs, changed her shorts underneath. She then loosened her hair and, looking in a mirror, slowly and carefully rearranged it as it should be. Those present assisted in silence. Finally, Tiga invited a friend to trim her hair. There was really little or nothing to cut. Tiga had the habit of always keeping her bangs in order. But it was a ritual cutting. Following the procedure through a mirror, Tiga helped, advised, and guided her friend. They scrupulously searched for strands of hair supposedly out of place and somehow found one, and then another, and so on, which were then cut to measure. Everything was done slowly and solemnly. Tiga was finally ready for the rite with "the incense and the oil."

In the liturgical actions of preparation—the changing of the shorts and the cutting of the hair—as well as in the rite with "the incense and the oil" that followed, Tiga performed the function of a medium. In Tiga and through Tiga, those present remembered and honored Andas in particular and, with him, all the ancestors.

At the same time, the cult for Andas and the ancestors translated itself into respect for the past and for the traditional ways of living. By asking for a return to the old dwelling, to the ancient way of building houses, to the ancient sober way of living, to the old way of dressing and making

up, Andas and the ancestors defined a custom with ethicoreligious connotations. The nostalgia for a personal past, which often actualizes itself in an attachment to one's childhood home, also suggests the collective longing for the good old days and the wisdom matured in experience. In the cult of the ancestors, these personal and social forms are exalted and elevated to the level of existential models.

Tradition, with its insistence on remaining as it has always been, presents the models that sustain life and guarantee the survival of the Badjao community. To care for life means to care for the existential models in which life takes shape. The djin-spirits are the very same umboh-spirits, the ancestors who, with Umboh, take care of life. All these spirits are keen on tradition because it guarantees survival.

PAG-ADDAT FOR DJIN-BEARERS AND SOCIETY

The cult of the djin-spirit, along with the ideology that sustains it, makes the djin-bearer the object of particular respect. Thus respect for the sacred becomes respect for the persons in whom the sacred is identified.

Djin-bearers can be found in any Badjao village but are not always easily identifiable because a djin-spirit is an ineffable reality. Even if recognizable from its deeds, it remains inaccessible to sensory perception. Ultimately, perceiving its presence is a matter of faith. Anyone can believe himself or herself to be possessed by a djin-spirit and proclaim this. Those who hear are free to believe along with this person or not.

In theory, all members of the Badjao community could be djin-bearers. In practice, the djin-spirits take up residence within some, but not all, persons who command an important social status or role. Respect for the djin-spirit thus becomes respect for the establishment.

The establishment can be easily recognized in the ensemble of the great and good who for one reason or another are made objects of respect. Not all these persons are respected in the same way, nor is the respect universal. Each

kampong, each family, and ultimately each Badjao has its *own* group of the great and good.

Leaders

In a village there is no one who really functions as a leader over the whole community. There are several leaders. When necessary, they gather and deliberate together, though this is rare. These leaders are the heads of various *kampong*, each numbering twenty or thirty family groups. The numbers can vary greatly, as family ties and loyalties overlap from one *kampong* to the other. Each *kampong*, however, is also physically localized. Those who identify themselves with a *kampong* tend to group themselves in a certain area of the village. Choosing one compound over another signifies an intention to be part of a particular *kampong*.

The leaders are relatively young, averaging thirty to forty years old. They command respect not for their age but for some personal quality, like knowledge, morality, dynamism, and so forth. They become leaders because the people turn to them, and they remain leaders as long as the people consider them useful. They are *primi inter pares*—first among equals—often called to leadership against their wishes. In the face of external threats, to the weakest they can advise only escape. When the difficulties are internal to the *kampong*, leaders can resolve them only to the extent that the parties are willing to cooperate. Willingness to cooperate is greatly encouraged when those in conflict cannot risk jeopardizing the protection they receive from the *kampong*.

When a leader is recognized to be a *djin*-bearer, he carries within himself the spirit of some ancestor who had also been a leader or person of authority. In some way, the possession of a *djin*-spirit augments the prestige and therefore the authority of this leader. Still, to be a leader one does not need to possess a *djin*-spirit. Those who do possess it have functions that demand greater strength, such as religious functions. A leader does not have a specific function, but handles diverse tasks. A leader is a potential factotum or jack-of-all-trades. He can even function as imam.

The Imam

While leaders guide the community in its various profane functions, the role of an imam is to guide the community in sacred activities. The roles are parallel. Both guide, represent, and assume responsibility for all the people. At times the roles coincide. A leader ultimately is a "head," one who takes care of problems and situations for others who lack sufficient knowledge or capability.

The roles overlap partly because in practice every person could be an imam. Whenever someone leads a prayer, this person functions as an imam. Each household has its own imams. For daily needs one takes care of one's own. But in the strict sense, only those who can preside at the official rites, particularly weddings and funerals, can be regarded as imams. These imams are few—five or six in most villages.

What qualifies an imam is first of all his sacred knowledge. A rite performed as it ought to be ensures the attainment of the desired effect and represents the best guarantee against possible negative consequences. For example, when the spirit of a dead person causes trouble, it could be because the funeral rites were not done in the proper way. The imam who presided over them is called to task. His expertise is questioned.

In a wider sense, the knowledge of an imam is necessary for grappling with the world of the spirits. An imam should know the nature and the character of the different spirits. In the diversity of problems life presents, an imam ought to be able to recognize the spirits behind them, to understand their needs and demands, and to provide the appropriate prayers.

Sickness is often a reason to summon an imam. For the Badjaos, not every illness is of spiritual origin. Many are simply physiological and are treated with traditional medicine. But when the sickness has a spiritual origin, the remedy must also be of a spiritual nature. Pardon must be asked; the ire of the spirits must be pacified; and help must be sought with offerings, prayers, and appropriate rites. In this case, the imam functions as a spiritual healer, a "healing imam."¹¹

The services of an imam must be compensated, especially for the most important rites. This must not be seen as

payment, and giving such an impression is carefully avoided. The compensation is customarily presented during the rite itself. Money or goods in kind like cigarettes, rice, or cakes are placed very casually beside the imam on the *tepoh* where the liturgical action takes place. The imam, without turning his attention from the rite, casually glances at the offering and with a facial expression indicates whether it is sufficient or not. Generally, he asks for more, because those who render their services for little are considered of little value.

The compensation is later shared with the helpers and those present, as each is due. Even here there is a bit of a show. With the gravity of a man with great responsibility, the imam studies the offerings and the persons and then slowly apportions. This is also a rite of recognition—of the relative importance of each person and indirectly of the imam himself as the judge. The money is usually kept by the imam to cover expenses, such as for incense or the white cloth for covering the head; he might also buy food for himself.

If compensation is not given, the imam himself may get sick. Pains at the joints and headaches above all are feared. These are parts of the body with symbolic value. Personal power passes through the joints, and the head is one of the principal seats of power. "If not compensated, the imam would eventually lose his power." In every liturgical activity, sacred power is administered. In presiding, an imam expends his own power. The compensation restores him to his original supply of power. An imam is not simply an expert but a person with sacred power. His knowledge is itself sacred power. Hence, even information like sacred instructions should be compensated.

With the Badjaos, sacred power is never an amorphous and anonymous force. It appears individualized and personalized, as a spirit. In the case of the imam, his spirit is the principal agent that presides over the rite. It is therefore to be expected that the djin-spirits commonly dwell within the imams. In fact, those recognized as imams in the strict sense, "those who know all the prayers," are all djin-bearers. Their djin-spirits can be the spirits of ancestor imams, or leaders remembered as imams.

The fundamental characterization of an imam is based on sacred knowledge and skills, not on the possession of a djin-spirit. It is by learning the art that one becomes imam. As is the case with the leaders, the fact that an imam is a bearer of a djin-spirit is secondary, but such a state confers upon the imam higher credibility and more sanctions.

Panday

Leading the liturgical activities is not the exclusive privilege of men. Women who know the necessary prayers also preside. The panday is often asked to lead minor rites and can also often be seen leading the major rites such as the pag-umboh or the funeral rites. In this sense, a panday performs the functions of imam, though she is not called imam. This title seems to be reserved for men only.

A panday functions more or less like a healing-imam, but only she can assist at childbirth. From the point of view of modern medicine, her knowledge leaves much to be desired. The percentage of deaths in childbirth is rather high among the Badjaos. Even so, the local Badjaos always prefer their panday. In Luuk Bangka, the Office for Southern Cultural Communities had employed a trained midwife who was there for around five years without being given the opportunity to assist at a single childbirth. When a childbirth appears difficult, they may go to the hospital, but always accompanied by the panday. There can be no childbirth without the prescribed prayers.

To learn the art of a panday, special training is needed. More than apprenticeship, this can be described as discipleship. An intense personal relationship develops between the young woman who learns the profession and the panday who teaches her. A choice is presupposed from both sides. The young disciple puts herself under orders and at the service of her teacher. She assists whenever the panday is called for a childbirth. She also assists in the household chores, going with her teacher to fish, to the forest to fetch wood, or to the market. She will spend a great deal of her time at her teacher's hut, working, eating, and sleeping.

Two formative aspects are apparent: oral instruction and practical experience. The disciple is instructed in the secrets of the profession. This does not seem to be very theoretical. Experiences are recounted and explained. In Luuk Bangka, the people describe how Duong Sia, the youngest panday in the village, had spent long periods in the hut of her teacher, the panday Manai Liha, "to talk until very late at night." She learned about the various techniques of childbirth, memorized the necessary prayers, learned to recognize the different spirits and distinguish the harmful from the helpful.

Practical experience is coterminous with her formation. Every time the teacher is called for a delivery, the disciple assists. The disciple has the opportunity to appraise, integrate her knowledge, and acquire experience. Above all, by appearing in public with the approval of her teacher, she is slowly recognized and accepted as a panday. Before being on her own, "Duong Sia accompanied Manai Liha." Manai Liha for her part had learned the profession by "accompanying" her mother.

Manai Liha is a djin-bearer, one of the most powerful in her village. She carries the djin-spirit of her mother, a famous panday. Without this djin-spirit, her arm would lack the necessary power to practice the profession. The power to act as a panday, like all other powers, comes from Tuhan. Because of this, Manai Liha could start practicing her profession even when her mother was still alive. For the same reason, Duong Sia was also recognized as a panday even before she received her djin-spirit, which could only be that of Manai Liha. Like those of the imams, the services of the panday must be compensated; but an additional debt of gratitude is incurred that will link the mother, the child, and the panday for life.

The Umboh as Givers of Life

All the panday are also called "umbuh" by those who have received help from them: the women who gave birth and the children helped by them to come into the world. The use of this title is extremely significant. It recognizes the contribution that a panday makes in the emergence of a new life. The

panday's creative power transmits itself from the time a woman is recognized to be pregnant, develops during the whole pregnancy, and culminates at the moment of giving birth.

But the title *umboh* is used with more conviction, because more appropriate, with regards to parents and old persons. Here the gift of life is explicit. The children address their parents as "Umboh." The younger ones address the elders in the same way, for the latter are like parents of the village who have generated their community.

"Badjao community" can refer to all living Badjaos or to the totality of the living and dead. As we have already seen, each of the two communities can be seen as a body. Valued in the context of these metaphors is the role of the heads: the leaders. But each of the communities can also each be as a family. In this case valued is the role of the genitors: parents and old people. In the family of the living, parents and old people occupy a position similar to that of the ancestors; whereas in the family of living and dead, the ancestors occupy a position similar to that of the genitors. The title *umboh* becomes a categorical nominative that further exalts the status and role of the parents and elders because they represent the ancestors in the human community.

The term *umboh* does not necessarily presuppose the presence of a djin-spirit. It is simply a title of respect. The term is used analogically. When a djin-spirit is present, the term *umboh* assumes a deeper meaning. With this note of respect, faith in the presence of an ancestor is also confessed.

Although relatives and close friends are the first to acknowledge parents and old people as djin-bearers, not all the members of the community recognize them as such. Still, it seems one cannot find an old person who is not a djin-bearer, even the most lowly and insignificant. The more humble djin-bearer would host a djin-spirit somewhat like an angel protector that can punish anyone who might be disrespectful. Like their bearers, these djin-spirits are very discreet. The more powerful djin-spirits are more striking, more creative, and potentially dangerous. The old persons who can claim to possess them are the more respected elders.

Because they are djin-beaters, the old people are never left to themselves. The case of Tiga, mentioned earlier, demonstrates this. Tiga had no difficulty in finding the necessary black cloth for her shorts. She always kept several pieces in her suitcase, given to her by her children in honor of the djin-spirit of Andas. Once when her son Victor got sick, it was understood that it was because he had neglected his mother and consequently also been disrespectful to Andas. To apologize and recover, he brought his mother a piece of black cloth, precisely as would have pleased Andas. But wisdom teaches that prevention is more effective. Tiga's children watch over the suitcase, making sure it is always provided with black cloths, a blanket, and other necessary items. They also make sure that the bottle of oil for the anointing of the head is never empty.

Whenever people return from a long trip or a major fishing expedition, they never fail to bring a small gift or part of the catch to those whom they consider important—usually their umboh, the panday included. These forms of generosity are not mere economic expediency, allowing collective consumption of what might otherwise go to waste. They are true acts of pag-addat, acts of generosity but which are most obligatory. Born perhaps out of affection, they continue to be effective because of the respect due to the djin-spirit.

The study of a recurring anomaly can be significant at this point. In the stories explaining how the spirit of an ancestor comes to dwell in a person, sometimes the barakat of an ancestor becomes available and makes its appearance ahead of the djin-spirit that personalizes it. This anomaly can be due to the fact that the major concern—that which primarily commands Badjao thought in this area—is not so much the need of giving the ancestors a “living memory,” but rather that of ratifying and thereby sanctioning the established social order. With the Badjaos, social status and roles remain still linked to the person holding them. But when the duties of those in responsible positions demand a greater strength, they must make use of an ancestor's barakat until his djin-spirit becomes available.

Igal-djins: The Dancing Djins

The bearers of the so-called *igal-djin*, or "dancing djin," are persons who perform dances in a state of trance for certain rites. They are perhaps the most interesting example of persons chosen as dwelling places of a spirit, but they do not seem to have a well-defined place in the established social order.

Not all dances evoke the *igal-djin*, nor are all dancers *igal-djin*-bearers. Unlike other djin-spirits which have specific characterizations, the *igal-djin* only defines and expresses itself in the dance. The dances generally follow the movements of the common *pang-igal*, but the context is purely ritual.

The liturgical sequence can vary. The dances can take place during the day or night, inside the house or in the open, in connection with other rites or by themselves. The *agong* is always played, usually with two other instruments.

To start with, all those who want to dance take turns on the floor. Dancing freely, they provide a prelude until the *igal-djin*-bearer makes his or her entrance and begins to dance. Slowly, the *igal-djin*-bearer leaves a normal state and passes into a trance. The body shakes uncontrollably and there is grinding of the teeth. There is an uttering of inarticulate sounds and incoherent phrases, mixed with some meaningful sentences. There seems to be no complete loss of consciousness. No stimulant substances are used. At times, seawater is offered to the dancer, who takes it only to spit it out on those present. Finally, the dancer slowly comes out of the trance and returns to normal. The dance is over.

Alingsaran is an *igal-djin*-bearer of the djin-spirit of his father, a great imam who possessed the dancing djin among his powers. Each month under the full moon, Alingsaran honors the djin-spirit of his father by performing the sacred dance of the *igal-djin*. He must do this regularly or he would get sick. He may skip one full moon, but not more than one.

The dances of the *igal-djin* can also take place during any major rite such as a wedding or a funeral. They also have therapeutic uses for those who fall ill because of a lack of respect to an *igal-djin*. In all cases, these dances are specialized

lingual activities placed within the cult of the djin-spirits. The rite of the dance takes the place of the rite of the oil.

On the whole, the phenomenon of the igal-djin is not very clear. It is difficult to find any justification for it. Its existence does not seem to be necessitated by a clear social function, as seems to be the case with the other djin-spirits. Its origin is not known. "It has existed since time immemorial," the Badjaos say. A finger pointed towards a primordial spirit: a sort of civilizing hero who would have taught the art of the dance and is still the protector today? The suggestion is neither evident, nor compelling. It is difficult, therefore, to speak of a "djin of the dance." Today, among the Badjaos, any igal-djin is simply the spirit of a real ancestor who knew how to perform sacred dances. Simply because "he himself had an igal-djin."

THE ODD ONES OUT

Always in the context of the spirits that make themselves present in persons, certain phenomena, otherwise incomprehensible and uncontrollable, are explained. For example, a person who behaves grotesquely or abnormally because of mental illness or a person who behaves asocially or outrageously nonconformist is, according to the Badjaos, moved by a djin-spirit.

However, deviant behavior in clear contradiction to tradition and social order cannot possibly be attributed to the djin-spirits of the ancestors. Those responsible must be other entities that are possibly erratic, like the behavior of their bearers. These djin-spirits cannot be other than the true djins spoken of in the preceding chapter, the unpredictable and irresponsible spirits that often for no reason at all disturb people and that the Badjao pneumatology places near the seats of the saitan.

Obviously, not all strange behavior can be blamed on the action of the djins. Human factors can enter into play. For example, when an abandoned young woman acted hysterically whenever the moon was full, the people said that her ex-lover was responsible. From Malaysia where he lived, he was putting

himself under the wind as he watched the moon. Through the moon that was shining on both of them, he communed with her and harmed her.

The image of a spirit that enters the body and takes control of a person suggests a curtailment of human freedom and initiative. In the case where the djin-spirits are ancestors, the role of the djin-bearers are simply reshaped. The leader, imam, panday, or parent is no longer seen as the actor but merely the instrument. Through the djin-bearers, ancestors are at work. In the case of real djins, persons who behave abnormally are freed from the weight of any moral responsibility and cannot be judged negatively. Seen in this more sympathetic light, persons such as these can be accepted for what they are. They, too, are Badjaos with a place in the community.

The presence of an ancestor in a person is described as an "indwelling." Through its benevolence, the djin-spirit chooses and favors an individual. It enriches such persons with superior faculties and honors them in society, ascribing to them a role of responsibility. On the other hand, when a real djin makes itself present in a person, one speaks of "possession." The connotation is negative. A demonic spirit subjects an individual to its whim, tormenting that person, and ridiculing him or her in the community. It condemns the "possessed" person to marginality.

The djin-spirits of the ancestors and real djins articulate the moral, political, and religious life of the Badjao community in a sacred dimension. The djin-spirits of the ancestors propose the ideal. They visualize the main forms of personal realization and embody the value system that sustains and guides social life. Real djins represent what people should not be. Descriptive of a tragic life experience, they become the symbol of social anomalies.

It is not uncommon for non-Badjaos to conclude that persons "possessed" by a djin are the quintessence of the "djin" phenomenon: the true djin-bearers of the village. This sociological reductionism is understandable. The djin-bearers that occupy respected positions in the established social order—

though they can at times be described as "djins," that is, djin-bearers—are in general recognized and identified by their status or role. Possessed persons, on the other hand, do not have any specific position or social function. Only the fact that they are odd persons, that is, under the influence of a real djin, identifies them.

But simply looking at the phenomenon in question in this way is not justified. It can lead to wrong directions. One may assign possessed persons an importance which they do not have, as though they too were part of the establishment, perhaps performing a shamanic role. In reality, the respect the Badjaos have for these persons is more of compassion than esteem. The people do not expect any social contribution from them. They are simply the odd ones out.

6

In Search of Salvation

IN THE HUT OF MANDALI, the *igal-djin*-bearer of Luuk Bangka, there were banners, the same kind that can be seen on the seats of the *saitan*. But this time they had nothing to do with the *saitan*. They were part of the offerings that the parents of a certain Aliasas had presented to Mandali.

Aliasas lived in Semporna, Sabah, about two days away by boat. He had gotten sick. One of the healing-imams who examined him explained that the cause had to be sought with Mandali, so Aliasas's relatives went to Luuk Bangka.

Mandali performed the dance of the *igal-djin* for them. In the course of the trance, the reasons for the sickness were revealed. In the past, Aliasas had briefly lived in the same village as Mandali and been asked by him to help in the construction of a boat. Aliasas refused. He said he did not have the time, but that was not true. The *igal-djin* revealed that Aliasas had refused because he did not want to have anything to do with Mandali. There were grudges which he had been nurturing up to now. This was the reason for the sickness.

Normally the *igal-djin* dwells in a person, as any other *djin*-spirit would reside within its bearer. It is content with making use of the bearer's image and social status without altering his or her consciousness or behavior. This way of existing gradually changes in the course of the sacred dance. Here, the *igal-djin* comes out in the open, taking full possession of

its bearer. The bearer falls into a state of trance, assumes erratic behavior, and changes voice.

The igal-djin is in full control, governing and guiding the dancer. The igal-djin is the one that dances, as can be deduced from the name "the dancing djin" itself. At times the bearer speaks, but is not the one thinking and speaking. The igal-djin speaks through the bearer, bringing thoughts that come from the other world. The Badjaos take them as real revelations, as did the relatives of Aliasas.

One should not think that the igal-djin-bearer, in trance, produces many great utterances. The confused mixture of sounds and obscure words hardly yields a coherent thought. Obviously, one pays particular attention to anything uttered on a sacred occasion, in the hope of receiving a sign or sacred message. As a matter of fact, not all the dances of the igal-djin produce "revelations."

The utterances appear less confused when the dance of the igal-djin is performed for a case of sickness. "Revelations" usually appear here, but only to denounce the shortcomings of the sick person. Like any other djin, the igal-djin can also be offended, for example, by a lack of respect for the djin-bearer or for the djin-spirit itself. Ultimately, these revelations are not completely new. This was the case for Aliasas, whose relatives went to Mandali because a healing-imam had told them that the cause of the sickness would be found there. Mandali defined more clearly the substance of Aliasas's shortcomings.

In the final analysis, a sick person seeks the help of the igal-djin once a diagnosis has already been made. The attitude is not so much of one seeking revelations, but rather of one asking for forgiveness in confessing one's shortcomings. In this case, the sacred dance must be seen primarily as part of a healing ritual. This was the case with Aliasas. This was an instance of a tremendous expiation, considering the expenses and sacrifices of the journey, and the humiliation of submitting to a person who was certainly not a friend. This was a person who, in a trance, exacerbated the matter by producing a series of painful accusations. The relatives of Aliasas confessed and apologized. They expressed their sincere change of heart and compensated by offering cigarettes, perfume,

banners. Indeed, it is not unusual for the sick person, once cured, to also personally visit the igal-djin-bearer. The entire rite would then be repeated.

In Luuk Bangka, Mandali was the only igal-djin-bearer, but in Sitankai there are several. They are easily found in Tabawan, Tungbankaw, Sibutu, and Semporna. "Wherever there are Badjaos, one can find igal-djins." The phenomenon is undoubtedly widespread, but its importance is relative. It is certainly not a phenomenon that can be described as Badjao shamanism. With the Badjaos, the ecstatic experience does not represent the religious experience *par excellence*. Nor does ecstasy have an important role in the conduct of their religious, much less their social, affairs.

As a matter of fact, the "revelations" and "inspirations" that can be found in the great historical religions are nowhere to be found in Badjao belief. To discover the desires of their spirits and meet them, so as to fulfill their personal aspirations, the Badjaos depend almost exclusively on a sacred science, deduced rationally from experience. To confirm this, it is useful at this point to briefly look at how the problem of sickness is dealt with and to examine the diagnostic-curative process among the Badjaos.

ON SICKNESS

Not all sicknesses are believed to be caused by a spirit, but those that are caused by a spirit require treatment that differs from spirit to spirit. Before any attribution of responsibility, one must analyze the sickness, an analysis which in its own way is very rational. From this analysis, one can recognize whether one has to deal with a spirit or not, and then which spirit one is confronting. It is therefore from this analysis that one recognizes the significance of the religious experience connected with that sickness.

When one falls sick, one does not wait for the opinion of an expert before looking after oneself. The bulk of Badjao medical knowledge is a common heritage, shared among the

people. Any person can make an analysis of what is *wrong*, even alone. But usually, to strengthen and integrate one's *own* observations, one also seeks the opinions of others. The opinions and views of the healing-imams are particularly appreciated. They are always consulted for more grievous sicknesses.

In all cases, the diagnosis remains a very informal affair. The visit of the healing-imam has the appearance of a *courtesy* visit rather than a medical call. Given the shape and arrangement of the Badjao hut, the sick person could never be found alone, even if he or she so wished. Daily life continues around the ill. The healing-imam is received as a guest. He sits cross-legged on the floor, conversing with those present. Talking casually, he visits with the sick person.

First of all comes a true symptomatology. The sick person, with the help of relatives, enumerates and describes in rich detail his or her physical discomforts: headaches, vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, pains in the bones, and so on. In the course of the conversation, the healing-imam often integrates this information with an objective examination. This examination is very simple, usually consisting of two types. Either or both can be done, depending on the procedures or the flourishes of the healing-imam.

The first examination is that of the pulse. As will be seen better later, the pulse is the main "door" to the arm, and the arm is a person's most important seat of power. This power, among other things, is a life-giving element. From the examination of the pulse, the healing-imam seeks to understand whether the power of the sick person is high or low, intense or dilute, hot or cold, and so on. It is difficult to say exactly what the healing-imam feels or sees. It depends greatly upon his "sensitivity" and intuitions based on the symptoms.

The second examination checks for fever. This is the more important and decisive examination and may be done alone. There are two types of fever. When the body is hot all over, including the hands and feet, the sickness is said to be an ordinary sickness. In modern terms, it could be described as a physical sickness. When the sick person's body is hot while the hands and feet are cold, then the sickness is caused by a spirit. It is said to be a "real" sickness.

The importance of the second examination is reiterated by the choice of the curative procedures that follow. In the case of physical sickness, the sick person is treated with the various herbs and concoctions of the native Badjao medicine. When possible, the patient is immediately taken to the hospital. In the case of a "real" sickness, the cures are of a mystical nature.

When the symptoms are unclear, or the analysis is not definitive, the healing-imam must admit ignorance. In this case, hospitalization is simply suggested. "When the patient is immediately taken to the hospital," the Badjaos explain, "it means that they do not know the reasons for the sickness."

At times, patients with a "real" sickness do not recover with the prescribed treatments. In this case, the final recourse is also the hospital. After having done the *pag-umboh* and taken offerings to a local saitan, one woman related, "Today we do the *pag-sumangat*. Then we are through with the spirits. If my mother is still sick, we will take her to the hospital."

On the other hand, some patients are treated in a hospital and discharged, but from the people's viewpoint are still "not healed." It may be that the patient suffers from a terminal sickness, or requires a long recovery period before overcoming symptoms of weakness and fatigue. In these instances, without expressing negative judgments about the treatment, the people explain that the hospital did all it could, that is, treated only the physical aspects of the sickness, leaving unresolved those of a spiritual nature.

The two different kinds of sickness, the physical and the real, can be present in the same person to varying degrees. The possibility of various combinations leads to a variety of diagnoses. In fact, the people know that some healing-imams tend very easily to send people to the hospital, while others rely greatly on prayers and rites.

Once the first distinction is made, the diagnosis continues. For "real" sicknesses, one must determine which of the many spirits is responsible for the malaise. The major distinction is between what we will call "human spirits" and "superior spirits." The human spirits include the spirits of living persons and the spirits of the dead. All the dead can be included,

but usually what is meant are the so-called "bad spirits." The superior spirits are the ancestors, Umboh, and the *saitan*. In theory, human spirits cause minor sickness, whereas superior spirits cause grave illness. The two types of sickness require two types of remedies, often very different from each other.

To identify first the type of spirit and then the particular spirit tormenting the patient, the healing-imam uses a sort of medical anamnesis. Conversing with the patient and the patient's acquaintances, the imam reviews the personal history of the sick person. It resembles a police investigation. First, the healing-imam probes the patient's own suspicions, drawing out information regarding recent events in the life of the patient, his or her activities, places visited, persons with whom he or she had relationships, and so forth.

Thus, a series of clues is gathered, which the healing-imam carefully weighs in the light of his knowledge of the behavior of the different spirits. From the whole, he constructs his hypothesis and pinpoints one spirit, the one he believes could have reasons to be angry with the patient.

Some healers use magic devices, in combination with this anamnesis and at times in its place. Occasionally their use can even replace the first analysis. We cite some examples: Seated before the sick person, the healer takes a bowl with burning incense, prays, and then addresses the spirit of the incense, posing questions. A positive or negative answer is read from the movement of the smoke. Sometimes, a gold trinket, a needle, or other object is dropped into a basin of water. The answers to the succeeding questions are obtained from the position of the object at the bottom of the basin. At other times, the Koran is opened at random and interpreted.

These and other similar magic devices, though known because they are relatively widespread, cannot be regarded as part of the classic Badjao diagnostic. They are used by practitioners who generally do not have important positions. The recognized healing-imams, like the ordinary people, look at these tricks with suspicion. Only a few make use of them.

One usually does not limit oneself to one healing-imam, but consults several. Each offers his diagnosis. To agree is not

the intention. On the contrary, to show his expertise, a healing-imam cannot simply repeat or confirm what someone else has said. For the patient, who may be the victim of the anger of not only one but several spirits, a total view regarding the etiology of his or her malady is not displeasing. The patient will have to undergo various healing rituals but, as a reward, he or she will be more certain of getting rid of the illness.

This variety of diagnoses is also acceptable because each is reasonable in itself. The healing-imam arrives at his hypothesis and formulates a judgment, not on the basis of an inspiration fallen from heaven but through empirical means. His reflection is developed on the basis of a series of clues. Having made up his mind and formulated an opinion concerning the sickness, the clues become the proof of the truth and validity of his diagnosis.

Sitti Barma was ill. Various healing-imams were called. After a thorough examination, each finally gave his opinion. The result was four very distinct diagnoses.

According to the first healing-imam, the cause of the *malaise* was "high blood pressure." Sitti Barma too easily and too often got angry with children and neighbors. The external irritability was nothing but the expression of an internal state. With the *Badjaos*, anger can be dangerous, both to the person who in any way causes it and to the person who allows himself to be affected by it. This is also the reason one seeks to live in peace with everybody. When quarrels break out—and among the *Badjaos* there are many—the persons usually look for reconciliation after the confrontation. They want to remove every shadow of ill-feeling.

Regarding Sitti Barma, everyone in the village knew the stories related to the marriage of her daughter. The daughter had fallen in love with a young man of *Bilatan*, an island a few hours away by boat. Against her family's wishes, the daughter left home and married without the consent of her parents. This kind of marriage, though not frequent, is an alternative governed by a series of rules and well-defined customs. To remove any possible ill-feeling, the bride is always

"brought back" to the parents after a certain period of time. She apologizes and asks them to accept the accomplished fact. When Sitti Barma received the visit of the repentant couple after a month, she quite unexpectedly did not accept the compromise. She took back her daughter, sanctioning in this way a real divorce. All this caused great irritation.

According to the first diagnosis, this was the root of Sitti Barma's sickness. According to some, her daughter's ex-husband was "very angry" with her. The daughter, too, could have at least been partially responsible. She had resigned herself to living with her mother, but "she was not happy," the people remarked. "She did not say anything because she kept everything inside." The healing-imam, however, thought it better not to directly point to these persons. He preferred instead to remind Sitti Barma about her responsibility in all this, inviting her to admit that she too was not happy and carried inside her some dark ill-feelings that tortured her.

As medicine for "high blood pressure," the healing-imam advised Sitti Barma to take a ritual bath, together with her daughter. This would lower the blood pressure of the patient and, if necessary, appease the anger of her daughter. Since at the moment Sitti Barma was in rather serious condition and should not undergo this rite, she resolved to do it as soon as possible.

A second healing-imam diagnosed that the origin of the sickness was the wrath of a spirit of Bilatan. Sitti Barma's husband was from Bilatan. In accord with their customs, he continued to live and work in Bilatan, far from his wife, even after marriage. Sitti Barma used to visit him for some days every month, supporting herself by farming seaweed and gathering seashells. This was how her daughter got to know her husband.

Sitti Barma had fallen ill only a few days after her last trip to Bilatan. It was therefore reasonable to think that she might have offended some saitan there. Anyone can blunder, but strangers most easily because they do not always know the locations of the seats of the saitan, especially the new ones. Moreover, a stranger who arouses particular interest among the people cannot avoid attracting the attention of the local

saitan. A person like Sitti Barma, relatively foreign to that island, should have been more careful and paid more explicit respect to their presence.

This diagnosis was probably connected to the convictions underlying the first diagnosis. Claiming sovereignty over a given territory, the saitan also claim sovereignty over the people who live there. It is therefore possible that an offense made against the people of Bilatan was perceived as an offense against the saitan who reside there, and the anger of the local people may have become the anger of their saitan.

As a remedy, Sitti Barma was advised to return to Bilatan with offerings to be placed at the principal seats of the local saitan. In place of Sitti Barma some other person could go. Being rather difficult to accomplish, this rite was also postponed for the future, until tranquility was found and the money needed for the trip and the offerings could be collected.

The third healing-imam also believed that the sickness originated in the anger of a saitan. In his opinion, however, the saitan was local. The morning of the day she fell ill, Sitti Barma had gone to a nearby field to collect *pandan* leaves and make some mats. In that area, there was a tree long known to be inhabited by a saitan. That was the saitan held responsible.

The tree is so near the village that the people take its presence a bit for granted. The children spend their time playing in its shade. They enjoy climbing and hiding among its branches. The adults pass by it every time they go to the market. On the shore not very far away they repair their boats. Usually they do not even trouble to pay respect to it. The saitan there rarely gets angry, but something went wrong for Sitti Barma that time.

To atone, it was necessary to visit it to apologize and take offerings. The material was bought, and the banners were prepared. After the rice was cooked, it was shaped into cakes. Finally, the persons who were supposed to go on pilgrimage and intercede for Sitti Barma gathered together. Before setting out, as a matter of obligation, permission was asked from Umboh with whom the patient rested.

The reason she was resting with Umboh was that the fourth healing-imam had diagnosed that the cause of the sickness

had to be sought with Umboh himself. Sitti Barma had irritated him by not properly celebrating the Umboh Pai Baha-o. She had celebrated the Umboh Pai Baha-o too late. It had been done out of season and therefore was no longer the right pag-umbuh. The wrong celebration served only to give Sitti Barma the illusion that she deserved the good will of Umboh. Umboh's wrath had caused the sickness. As expiation an Umboh Pai was celebrated.

In Sitti Barma's case, other spirits were not brought up in the various diagnoses. But in any case one should not forget them. In the etiology of several sicknesses, the spirits of the dead have an especially relevant role.

Terminal Illnesses

Not all spirits behave in the same way. Though in theory the spirits of the ancestors and Umboh are powerful enough to do any amount of harm, as a matter of fact they never cause terminal illnesses. "If they sometimes disturb, it is only because they want to be remembered." They can get angry, but they always give corrective punishments. Those who do harm are the "evil spirits." These restless spirits can cause terminal illnesses. These are brought about by the saitan.

When someone dies, especially tragically, there is a tendency to absolve the more important, and more dangerous, spirits so as to put the blame on the less important, less dangerous human spirits. Often, it is said that a person died because "someone has done bad things to him," sometimes indicating magic such as an evil eye or spell. At other times, this is simply a reference to someone's uncontrolled anger.

Banwasa was about forty years old when he died. He had already been separated from his first wife for a long time. She lived with his five children on another island. He was living with his second wife, with whom he had another child. The last two months of his life he was sick with fever, coughing and vomiting blood. It was said that he had tuberculosis. But it was also said that the real cause of his death was the wrath of a Malay.

Some time before, one of Banwasa's children from his first marriage was living in Sabah where he had bought a *kumpit*. But he had bargained too much on the price and made the vendor angry. The young son of Banwasa "bought a boat from an angered person." As though this were not enough, it was added, this vendor was a Malay. "The anger of the Malays is very dangerous. It can even cause death."

Anger

Discovering the exact origin of a sickness or cause of death is not simple. The variety of symptoms and clues point to a combination of physical and spiritual factors. Ultimately, the real cause of the evil is always recognized as beyond comprehension or explanation. However, one constant appears as a common denominator: anger. By oversimplifying, one can affirm that at the root of illness, death, and all other evils that torment human life is anger.

The generic term, *anger*, when used with reference to human spirits connotes a reality ontologically different from the anger of the superior spirits. Nonetheless, even the anger of the human spirits is not something to be underestimated. It is not reducible to mere irritation, a superficial emotional reaction in the spectrum of human behavior. It appears to be something that is "in" a person.

There is a distinction between the person and his spirit. Anger belongs to the world of the spirit. As observed elsewhere, the indiscriminate use of the term *spirit* and the generalizations derived from it can at times lead to a predication of divine attributes upon human spirits. This has a bearing on the characterization of human anger as well. The anger of the human spirits, among other things, evokes the erratic behavior of the *saitan*. One always takes notice too late of having fallen short of respect towards them, after one has already been punished. In the same way, human anger is erratic. It can harm, even without deliberate intention, both the person who has occasioned it and the person who bears it within.

DEFINITION AND LOCALIZATION OF THE SACRED

The most competent healer is always the imam, the spiritual guide. It cannot be otherwise. The diagnosis of the sickness in fact presupposes a knowledge of the sacred, of the personality and nature of the various spirits. Only from such a knowledge can one understand the ultimate meaning of most symptomatologies and anamneses. It is from this knowledge that in the final analysis one can understand the desires, or the whims, of a spirit.

This knowledge comes from experience. This can be personal experience in the present, such as knowledge of those who can harm with the evil eye, spells, and so on. It is also personal experience from the past, such as memories of the dispositions and behaviors of particular spirits of the dead. Finally, it is an experience to a large extent religious, which touches all the spirits of the dead, evil spirits included. Above all, there is religious experience with the supreme spirits. Umboh's personality and nature are known from a reflection on his role in society and in creation. The dwelling places of the saitan are known by their character, as well as from religious experience.

The saitan dwell in the substantial that can be seen and touched. They do not become present in every physical object, but only in some particular objects with recognizable sacred potential. Even before an experience that might indicate the dwelling place of a saitan, the Badjao religious sensitivity recognizes in the configuration of some places a sacred presence.

One day, going upstream from the sea along a creek in the forest, a Badjao friend and I came to a small solitary bay. Low tide had left a sort of muddy and chaotic swamp. Mangroves grew all around. In the background, far away, Bud Bongao was visible, a volcanic rock some eleven hundred feet high, known by the local people as a sacred mountain. The silence was broken only by the rustling of the forest, the cry of some wild bird and, far away, the continuous drifting of the sea.

Having scrutinized the landscape, my Badjao companion spoke, as if to himself, "In this place there is a saitan." He then continued explaining, "The saitan are found in places like this, where the water is low and swampy, with some rocks and thick trees. Rocks, water, and trees . . . there the powerful saitan are found." As if to complete the panorama, he added, "This is an isolated place, under the [sacred] mountain."

This configuration suggested a potential religious experience. The scenery was remote and wild. But above all, particularly significant elements of sacred symbology entered into the composition: rocks, trees, and water, against the background of a sacred mountain. These are the symbolic archetypes that, in Badjao religious experience, can become sacred revelations.

"In places like this," my friend continued, "a saitan goes about." It has not yet found a house. In fact no banner is visible. When you see banners on a rock or on a tree, it means that a saitan went there to dwell during the night."

If a saitan has taken residence only recently, it will not remain incognito for long. Sooner or later someone will have an experience that will open his or her eyes to the presence of the saitan. When I asked my friend how I would be able to recognize the presence of a saitan in that place, he bluntly answered, "When someone knows he has been attacked, he will most certainly come to bring the banners." At the origin of every process through which a sacred dwelling place is first recognized, there is always a religious experience.

Nurbaia was lying in bed with a high fever, headache, and nausea. The day before, she had been out alone to gather certain roots to be used as medicine for her sick granddaughter. When she returned she went to bed, tired. She was sick with chills when she woke up. Everyone came to the conclusion that the cause of the sickness was a saitan. There was a particular rock beside the shrub where she had taken the roots. Nurbaia described it: "A huge rock. Not really that huge. A rock with many smaller rocks attached, like in a mountain." Obviously, there must have been a saitan in that place. But because Nurbaia did not know of its presence, she

did not ask from it the required permission. So she *got sick*. Reparation had to be made. Because she was too sick to *move*, two of her relatives went to perform the required rite of *offering* to pacify the offended *saitan*.

Later, I went with some Badjao companions to see this *sacred seat*. The place was on a stony shore, surrounded by mangroves, opening onto the bay of Luuk Bangka. Hugged by the roots of a wild *calamansi* shrub, the rock was black lava, jutting out from the ground, about five feet wide and *one* foot high. It seemed to be nothing special. Nearby, *some* smaller pebbles disturbed by Nurbaia were still visible. The surroundings were desolate, with bare plants and stones. The place was recognizable only by three banners. The rice cakes were no longer there. "It means that the spirit has eaten them," one of those present commented. And so, on the bay of Luuk Bangka there was another *saitan*. From that moment, when the people passed by that place, they would start asking for permission.

The identification of the *saitan* had been possible through the sickness. For Nurbaia, as for every religious person, her sickness also had a supernatural dimension. In this sense, it turned out to be a religious experience. With the help of some symbolic categories commonly used among the Badjaos, such experiences lead to a renewed exploration of the world of the spirits and the recognition of a new sacred dwelling place.

With the Badjaos, the dramatic experience of suffering is undoubtedly the most common religious experience. They are a very vulnerable people with a precarious existence. No wonder, therefore, that suffering would ultimately be the experience that more frequently awakens interest in the world of the supernatural. For a person who lives at the extremes, life and death are all that matter. Indeed, from the quantitative point of view, the majority of Badjao religious activities start off and circle around the problem of evil, particularly as related to sickness.

However, it would be incorrect to reduce the Badjao *sacred world* to a human projection initiated by the problem

of evil. This reality is neither the only nor the principal reason the Badjaos turn to the world of the spirits. Even before a life free from evil, the Badjaos seek for the "true" life—the *atahah kalluman* or "the long life," as they say. This life can only be found in the supreme sacred realities.

THE SUPREME SACRED REALITIES

The sky was dark. Gusts of wind and rain battered the village, but it was already noon, the time of the wedding. The exchange of the dowry had already taken place the evening before. In the first hours of the morning, bride and bridegroom had received the ritual bath. The bride had spent the rest of the morning hidden in her hut, with her friends, adorning herself. Only the final act, the rite of union, remained. The bride was led to a crouching position on pillows, facing the wall of the head, with her back towards the people. She wore a white wedding dress, borrowed for the occasion.

The party of the groom arrives. The imam leads the way, with the groom and all the people behind. Everybody tries to enter the hut of the bride, slowly because the space is small. Suddenly there is a squeaking. The floor fearfully wavers. Under the excessive weight, it begins to give way. The hut collapses. All the people fall into the water. After a moment of panic, the situation becomes hilarious. Laughing and joking, the people swim to reach whatever boat or hut is nearby. In the confusion, the bride with her white dress stands out. Drenched with water, she tries to climb into a boat. Further away, the imam, adjusting the white skull-cap on his head, reaches the shore.

A comic incident, it is one of the many ordinary incidents in the daily life of the Badjaos. The wedding could have proceeded, but it was suspended. The incident was "the proof that the wedding, from the start, was not meant to take place." Not that the union of the spouses was inadvisable, but the day was not a propitious day. All knew that there was a sick child and a pregnant woman in the bride's *kampong*. Furthermore, the sky was covered with clouds: it was a day with no sun.

The ritual times had been respected. The bath was *done* in the morning. Above all, the rite of union began at noon. The time a rite is celebrated is not of little importance. As evident in the pag-umboh and in other rites to be described later, the time is part of the very structure of the rite. It is defined by the great cosmic cycles, which reveal with greater clarity an eternal order. Because eternal, it is sacred. The right time is the first entrance into the sacred.

But the right time is not all. What one ultimately seeks is the "fullness of time," that particularly favorable moment in which the sacred more easily emerges and thereby becomes more accessible. To begin the pag-umboh, the fullness of time is sought in the moment the sun is at its zenith. Other variables also come into play. One can detect these, indirectly, from the reasons advising against the celebration of a rite, as in the wedding above.

Actually, even the most serious worldly constraints do not seem to necessitate the postponement of a rite. They are not really impediments but rather indications of a degree of propitiousness. In his ritual praxis, what the Badijao looks for is not perfect fullness, but only the moment that appears more intense, more "propitious," when measured against an ideal scheme. As far as possible, he tries to avoid compromising too much, but he is not overly scrupulous. In the final analysis, a rite is always done when one wants to do it.

These conditions can be seen as signs or, to use an ancient idiom, "auspices." They tell "if" and finally "when" a moment can be propitious. Though not being decisive in imposing a postponement, they can become opportune in justifying it. One might, for example, want to postpone a rite to another day for a variety of reasons. These signs often become highly significant on hindsight. Weddings frequently go forward at all cost, where practical reasons seem to demand it. The lovers may have threatened to elope, the girl may be pregnant, or financial interests may be involved. In these instances, auspices are devalued and disregarded. However, they would be taken into consideration in the future, should that marriage end in divorce.

Nevertheless, the "fullness of time" is always a prime consideration. It is the ideal moment that measures all situations and commands the solutions one has to be content with. Here, the exception confirms the rule. Even if at times the provisos of the ideal appear merely contingent, in reality they are not. They are related to realities that for the Badjaos are of an eternal and sacred order.

Badjao Society

There are Badjaos who—exploiting external connections and perhaps in the company of some Tausug—are arrogant and provocative. They go around the village intimidating their own kind. In the opinion of the Badjaos, these bullies are no longer true Badjaos. They are Badjaos in name only. They have estranged themselves from the community. They have lost their dignity. There are not many of their kind, however. They are exceptions.

There are other differences among the Badjaos. Not all are destitute. Not all are illiterate; some have even been able to go to school. There are differences in status, roles, and affluence. But, with the exception of the nominal Badjaos, none of these differences are great enough to create remarkable imbalances of power. Badjao society remains egalitarian.

In this egalitarian context, primary relationships are easily developed. The cult of force is not present among the Badjaos. Their society is founded not on the use of power, but on free consensus. This type of interrelationship is made easy by the experience of a common condition, a shared social marginalization. Badjaos share the experience of poverty and existential precariousness. Everybody knows the same toil and the same suffering.

This leveling allows a free flow of solidarity from person to person. The Badjaos are all bound, for example, by an endless network of debts and credits for reasons from the most personal, like a dowry, to the most material, like a commercial loan. When one needs to borrow, one avoids persons one is indebted to and appeals to those with whom one has

credit. One collects what is due oneself and, when possible, even asks for a loan. Relatives, neighbors, and friends constitute a banking cooperative with no interest. The relationships are based on mutual generosity and gratitude.

The Badjaos also quarrel well. Their quarrels do not end in physical fights, but they do not spare each other epithets. And they do not exchange them in private. They shout them at each other from one end of the village to the other, sometimes even climbing to the roofs of their huts to make themselves better heard. Probably it does them good. They unload their ill-feelings and free themselves from anger. If anger remains, it can do harm to others, as well as to the one who nurses it. Among Badjaos there must be harmony.

This harmony is not a mere social convenience. It pertains to a sacred order. Even when its use is limited to coordinating social life, it is part of the sacred harmony that sustains the universe. Badjao usage and customs are the expressions of this sacred order in the human realm. In Badjao religious belief, this order finds definition in a series of metaphors.

We have first of all the images that visualize Badjao society as a body with Umboh at the head. Therefore Badjao society identifies itself with Umboh and acquires a sacred quality. This view is popularized in a series of religious convictions. Umboh takes care of life. Among other things he promotes social harmony. He does this by sanctioning the roles of the various leaders in Badjao society and instilling respect for usage and customs.

A second series of images emerges, this time from the symbology of the tree. This emphasizes the realm of social relationships pertaining to kinship. The tree describes genealogical succession and narrates a story about life. Umboh as ancestor becomes the very origin of life, and all men, generation after generation, have the privilege to participate in it. The life all Badjaos long for is described in the metaphor of the tree in the mythical "dialogue on life" and it is celebrated in the sacred tree. This is the atahah kalluman, the only true life. It is the sacred.

For the Badjao, society has a sacred foundation. It is a sacrament of the sacred. Because of its sacred quality, the Badjao

perceives his social life as a religious experience. This is easily perceived on the occasion of the celebration of a rite. In the search for the fullness of time, there should be perfection in the social situation. The wedding mentioned above was suspended because a woman was pregnant and a child in the kampong was sick. But there are a thousand and one other circumstances that can advise against the celebration of a rite—a death in the village, the unjustified delay of a fisherman who is expected back, a divorce, an ill-feeling between persons.

All these situations are apparently judged as bad omens on the basis of two different principles. The first, the principle of solidarity, is rather explicit, as it defines a direct and real limitation. When a member of society experiences difficulty or some situation that constrains and isolates him or her from community life, the other people must slow down to stay beside this person. The logic that sustains the entire social fabric is at stake.

The second principle is perhaps more important and defines a constraint by analogy and transfer. Each situation that is somehow incomplete or imperfect pollutes and disturbs what is normal. The normal is the reflection, in the contingent, of the sacred order. By definition, this order can only be complete and perfect.

Society is a sacred reality. Implicit in this first truth of Badjao faith is a first insight into salvation. Man alone is not true man. To become a true man, one must go out from one's own self and search for oneself in society. In this search, one finds a value of a different nature, superior to all the values proclaimed by the individual. The nominal Badjaos mentioned above, even before estranging themselves from their community, have lost this faith. They seek for its surrogate in the cult of force.

The Universe

To be touched by the universe is the most common, easy, natural way to encounter the sacred. The splendor of the sky,

the immensity of the sea, the mountains, the rocks, the trees, the silence of nature reveal in a gust of wind or the heat of the sun the presence of less apparent realities. For the Badjaos, these are all doors opening onto the sacred. And the sacred at times dwells in these forms.

Behind, in the harmony of a thousand movements, there is a continuous flow and return without end. The Badjao never poses the question of whether things can go otherwise. The Badjao lives in a world devoid of finality, commanded by necessity. The universe is what it is, and will always remain so, immutable and founded on an eternal order. In its wisdom, this order regulates both the cycle of the moon up in the sky, and the monthly period of the woman in the village. But it imposes itself above all on daily life; and with the solar cycle and the succession of nights and days, it finally shapes the life of all things. Consequently there is no sector of life that can be seen as exclusively human. The superhuman is present in every image and form of existence.

In this sacralized universe, for the Badjao, one situates oneself with the help of two particular metaphors. The first is the image of the human body, already used for society. Like the human body, the universe is a harmoniously organized whole. As the head gives the human body its orientation, so Umboh provides the orientation for the universe. Like a human body, the universe is full of life. It unveils a personality of its own.

The second metaphor appreciates the image of the humble Badjao hut. This is a dwelling place and in its own way also the universe. For the Badjao, one spends one's days, organizes one's existence, and develops one's identity in one's hut, and in the universe. In one's house, one meets with dear ones and enjoys their company. So also all the Badjaos meet, each one in one's own house, altogether on the same sea, under the same sky, in the grand communal house, the universe. The universe is where the community knits its social relationships. In the house or outside in the open, above all the Badjao prays, remembering the example of elders and the teachings of tradition.

The sacred order, which is the substance of the universe and which takes shape in the metaphors of the body and the hut, reveals itself in a variety of other ways—sometimes indirectly and sometimes with disturbing images. One of the reasons the wedding mentioned above was suspended was the weather. Bad weather is always a bad omen. Among other things, it hinders fishing. Bad omens can include a deformed plant or fruit, an animal's unexpected appearance, or an incomplete rainbow.

Certain aspects of the moon reveal omens. The full moon is regarded as a good omen. A lunar eclipse is considered a bad omen. During a lunar eclipse, pregnant women should take a ritual bath to free themselves from negative influences on the fetus. The serpent is a lunar animal, a symbol of conjugal union. When it appears, one's only defense is escape. One cannot kill it. "If he really loves his wife, a married man will never cut a serpent in two, much less if she is pregnant." The logic of the second of the two principles described above can be seen here. Perfection is found in normality and completeness, the properties of every order.

The sacralization of the universe does not limit or condition the use of nature or the environment. There are clear exceptions, such as the monkeys who live protected on the sacred mountain, Bud Bongao. In general, one cannot speak of a sacred fear that is translated into attention to, care and protection of the environment. In practice, there is no tree that cannot be touched, not even one which is the seat of a *saitan*. And there is no fish that should not be caught.

Neither are there aesthetic or economic reasons that suggest a need to protect the environment. The *Badjaos* do not seem to have the time nor the inclination to view nature romantically. It is rare to find someone who indulges in admiring the sea by day or the sky by night. Neither are economic reasons found. The *Badjaos*, who do not think much about tomorrow, are not concerned about saving for the future. They gather from the sea whatever the sea offers, convinced that creation has an unlimited richness and a vitality without end. Whatever one takes, gets replaced.

At times, they express some doubts. They note, for example, that the fish are decreasing and connect this with methods of commercial fishing or dynamite fishing. But knowing how each fruit of the sea has a price, they do not see why they should not take what they find, especially when others do, and with more radical methods.

Ecological awareness may be a concept beyond the Badjaos, but their expectations from nature are very limited. They live day to day and cannot accumulate more than they can use. They are also in the habit of respecting the law. Even when others illegally fish with dynamite, not many Badjaos do it. Aside from the nominal Badjaos, friends of politicians, or some policemen, the others do not have the courage to run the risk of getting caught. Regarding the law, the Badjaos are more afraid of men than of spirits. Environmental deterioration cannot be blamed on the Badjaos.

In the universe and in creation, the Badjao lives and moves pragmatically. This is not a pragmatism that derives from or presupposes the idea of a lordship over creation, as if man were its caretaker or owner. The Badjaos do not feel they are superpersons, or see themselves as beings uniquely worthy of existence. One does not live in the world as though one were at the center. One does not waste time in geographical forms of anthropocentrism which, for the Badjao, are products of the imagination. The Badjao is convinced that, to become a real person, one must free oneself from these illusions and search outside. One must search in the heavenly land, where the center of all that is true can be found. This is the real center of the world.

Religious Practice

The Badjao's intense desire and search for the sacred expresses itself in a profound veneration and respect for religious practices. These lead directly into the sacred and are consequently jealously kept.

Their traditional practices are not the only valid forms of worship. As a matter of fact, the Badjaos liberally borrow from

other religions. They are not prisoners of any exclusivism. Rather, nurtured in their own religious tradition, they have brought to maturity an interior habit that values and gives precedence to Badjao religious practices. These are the more efficacious.

Not all receive the same attention. Some are essential. The Badjao religious man identifies himself with these and does not compromise. They are fixed points. At the center of these is the pag-umboh, the rite to which all Badjaos are attached. This brings a person back to the company of ancestors and what is most sacred in life. Even those exposed to Western thought or required by their situation to conform to models of behavior of modern society remain faithful to it.

For example, Bunga, a teenage girl, got sick while she was studying at the University of Santo Tomas in Manila. To be a student there is an academic achievement that presupposes a solid Western-based critical education. Even with such a background, when she did not get well, she finally went to the market and bought a coconut and some palay. Back home (where she stayed in Manila), she locked herself in her room and secretly celebrated the pag-umboh. It was the decisive cure. As she says herself, Umboh gave back her health.

In another example, Haji Musa, a Badjao with a doctorate in education, is the director in charge of various schools in Sitankai. Like everybody else on that island, he is officially a Muslim. But no one could persuade him to stop his Badjao religious practices and conform to the Muslim religious cult. He told them that he had always celebrated the pag-umboh and always would, "because it does good. For a sick person, that is the most efficacious prayer."

Objects, words, actions, and attitudes that enter into the composition of the various religious practices are aimed toward perfection. Like the coconut and the palay for the pag-umboh, every offering—from the rice cakes for the spirits honored in the *pakan sumangat*, to the banners for the *saitan*—is chosen carefully and prepared with love, without counting expense or effort. Above all, one allows himself a perfect availability of time. There must be no pressures to

constrain the proper celebration of a rite. It must be *done* in the fullness of time, and there must be freedom to *postpone* it repeatedly.

Perfection of form is also sought. There is great concern and desire to celebrate each rite as tradition teaches, in the way it has been always celebrated from generation to generation, since time immemorial—as it had been taught by the ancestors from whom it came as a gift. Transparency and simplicity are not essential. The less comprehensible the rite is, the more mysterious and sacred it can be. The more complex it is, the more certain one is that the essential is not forgotten. Personal prayers can be added to enrich but not change the structure of the rite. Nevertheless, theoretically, there is no room for creativity or fancy.

Ironically, this concern for perfection and respect for form can sometimes be the cause of the degeneration of a rite. The concern to do each thing well, up to the smallest detail, can result in too much attention to nuances that often began as ornamentation or impromptu adaptations imposed by various kinds of conditions.

The persons most responsible for major changes are the so-called "experts," the imams who lead the rites. With the confidence of their expertise, they sometimes leave out important ritual elements that they consider irrelevant or modify forms that they do not consider appropriate. Sometimes they develop minor themes that they maintain to be "the true meaning" of the rite.

Popular religiosity is also guilty. Interested above all in getting results, it judges the validity of a rite by its efficacy and gives preference to one over another, independent of the original function. For a given rite, one tradition may prevail over another, and within a single tradition, a certain form may be preferred. In the anxious search for the most efficacious ritual form, a rite that ought to be celebrated only once might instead be celebrated several times.

All these modifications and repetitions must be seen as the search for a sacred orientation; that is, a process through which the religious man seeks to rightly position himself in the sacred. In this process, tradition imposes itself as teacher

and supreme guide. In the end, each manipulation is sought within the ambit of tradition and done in the name of tradition. At least in the mind of the people, it is a process of preservation more than of change, born out of the desire to do things well. Because each religious practice is sacred, it is not to be vilified with a distracted or hasty celebration. Neither is it to be abused by a change in form. Every religious practice must be approached on one's knees.

There is not much room for religious subjectivism. The most important religious practices do not presuppose an interior elevation on the personal level. They are communal celebrations, made in the community and with the community. They presuppose first of all the capacity to be in community, in the spirit of Badjao tradition. Only in this way can one hope to get close to and in some way enter into contact with the sacred.

The Sacred Names

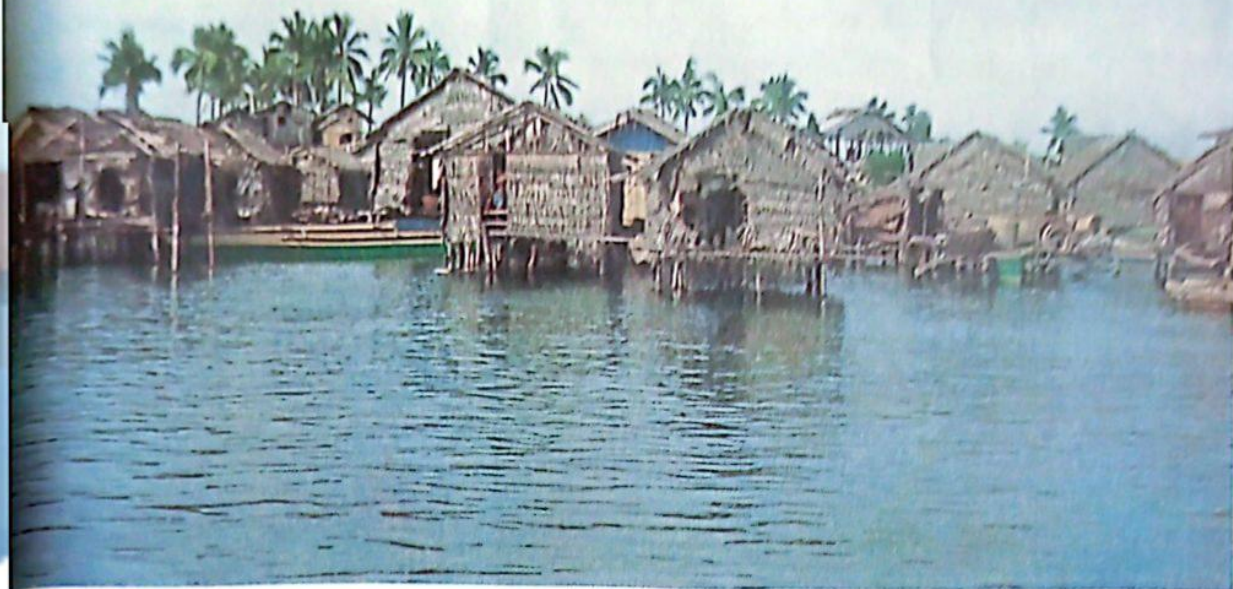
The most important Badjao spirits are not easily accessible. The greatest possible intimacy with them can be achieved through their names. The entire Badjao religious tension reaches its culmination in the recitation of the sacred names. The recitation of these names must have a real virtue: to save the one who recites them.

In all Badjao religious practices—every rite, every liturgical activity—one spirit in particular is remembered and named: Tuhan. One cannot forget him; it is a question of *pag-addat*. He is the supreme lord. Everything depends upon him. One can only turn to the other spirits with his permission.

Beyond his name, Tuhan remains inaccessible. He is present everywhere but does not reside anywhere. He is the god of sky, the symbol of the wholly other. As he is perfect, so he is abstract, like an idea, beyond human reality. When his power is revealed and made concrete in the world, he assumes questionable and deformed appearances, like those of the *saitan*, where it is nearly impossible to recognize him. Tuhan can rightly be present in the world only in secret. This is the condition imposed by his perfect absoluteness.

Man, who can give his full attention only to something concrete, encounters Tuhan indirectly through Umboh, the other great spirit whose name is never forgotten in Badjao religious practices. Umboh is the mediator, the first mediator given by Tuhan to man. In Umboh, Tuhan sanctifies the entire cosmos—society as well as the universe. In Umboh the Badjao religious man transcends himself and finds the center and the very foundation of his existence. He finds his salvation: life, whose physical well-being is founded first of all in the atahah kalluman.

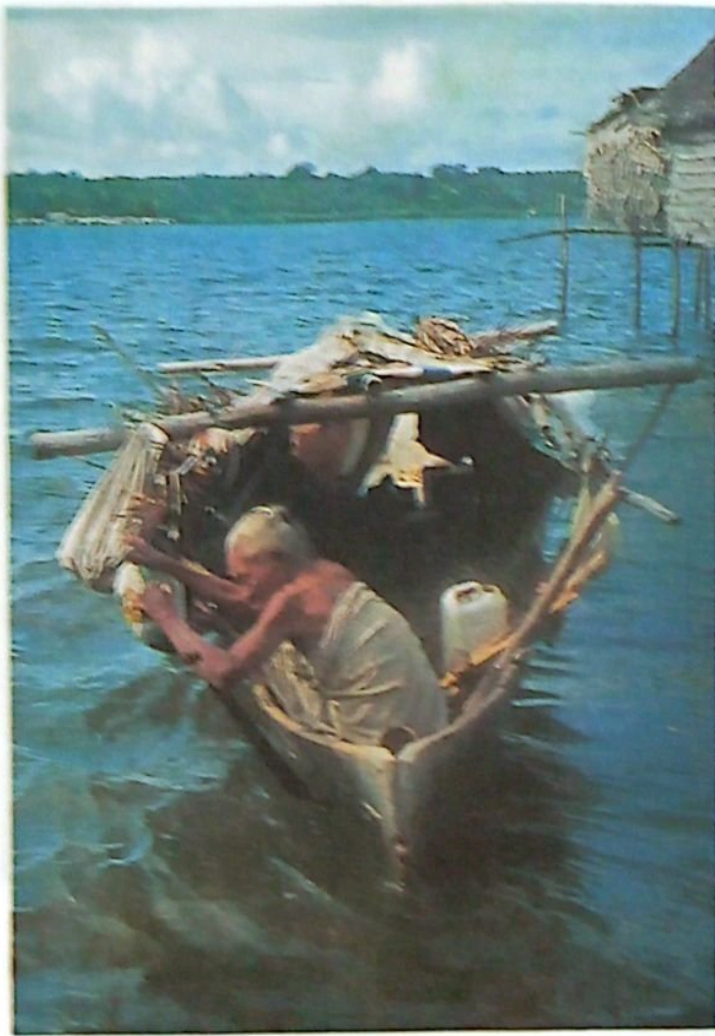
The ultimate absolute is not Umboh. Given his relative accessibility and concreteness, he could not be so. He is only a creature, sublimely superhuman, but still always a creature. Alone, he could not satisfy the metaphysical hunger of the Badjao religious man. Umboh mediates. Hidden, behind Umboh, there is always Tuhan. Only Tuhan, in fact, can save. In the last instance, Tuhan is the quintessence of the sacred, the ultimate goal of the anxious religious search of the Badjao.



Tugbangkao: a Badjao village shows building science reduced to bare essentials. Houses repeat a basic model that provides a protected area, the main objective of the shelter—only one room with two openings (front and back) on parallel sides, facing each other not at the center but at the side.



The Badjao man is the breadwinner, who spends most of his time out fishing—the main Badjao economic activity.



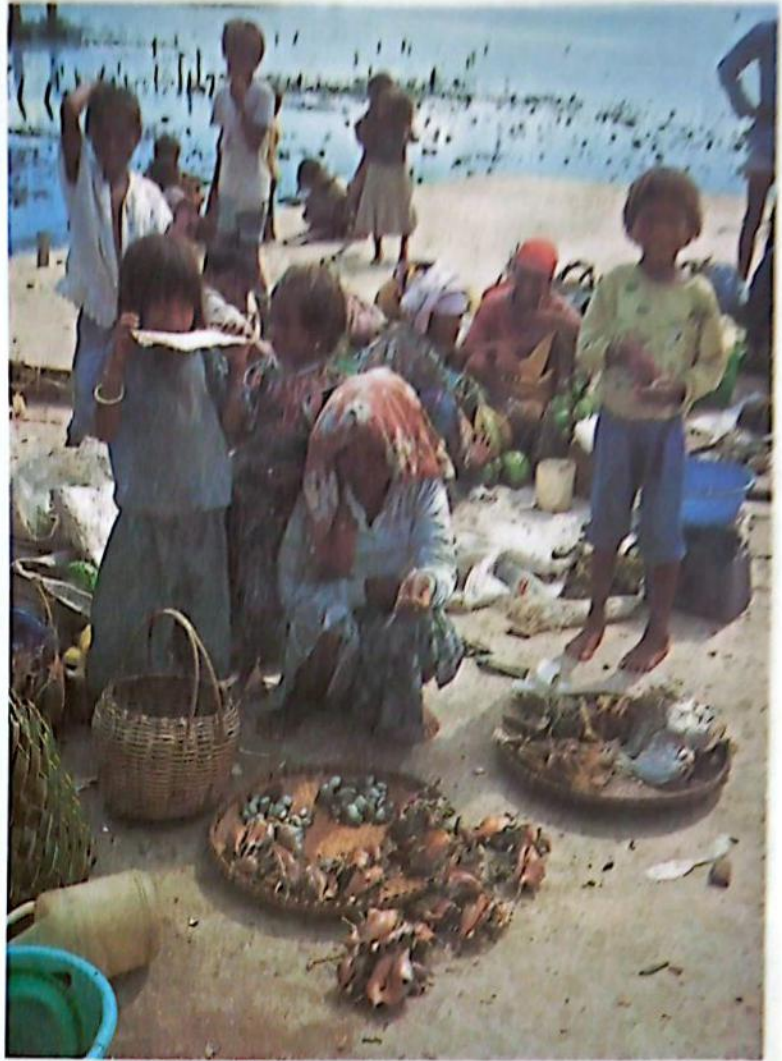
One of the few Badjaos still living in a boat brings a reminiscence of the past and reflection of the present that continues to haunt these people.



Handweaving tepoh from pandan reeds is the women's traditional way of earning cash.



*Manai Liha is the oldest
day and one of the most
erful umboh in Luuk
gka.*



*ooking and the marketing of
jao products still remain
cal woman's tasks.*

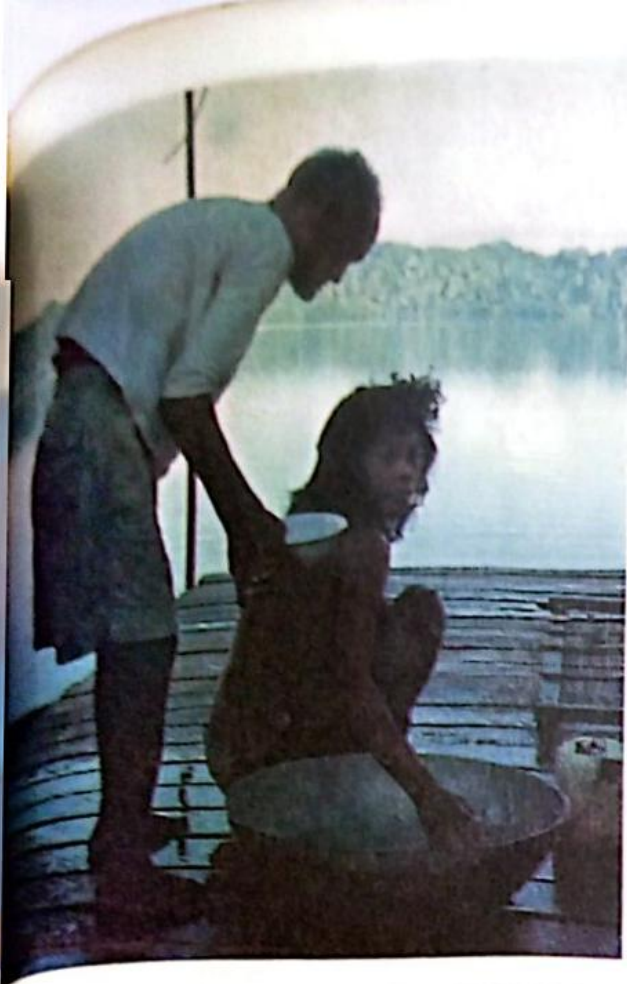




The Badjao woman tends to the rearing of the children, especially the very young.



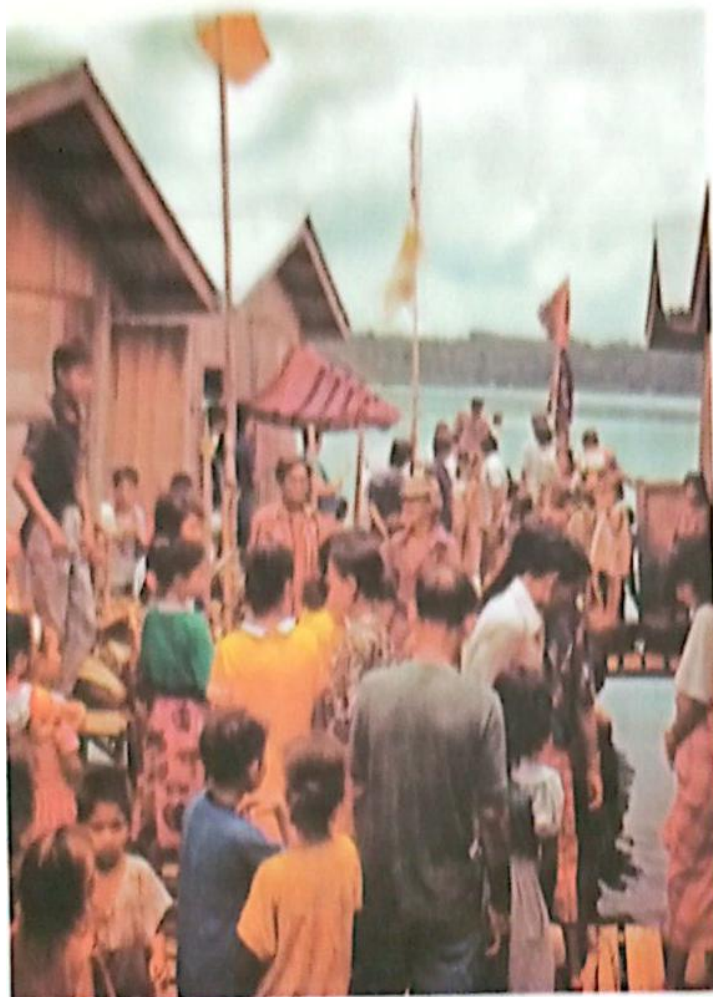
Badjao children study in a preschool provided by Christian missionaries—a service available only in Bongao. Some are able to join the first grade, where they need much encouragement for, like their parents in the larger society, they feel like pariahs.



In the initiation bath, the water is taken "from the womb of dawn"—replete with potentialities that bring power and life.

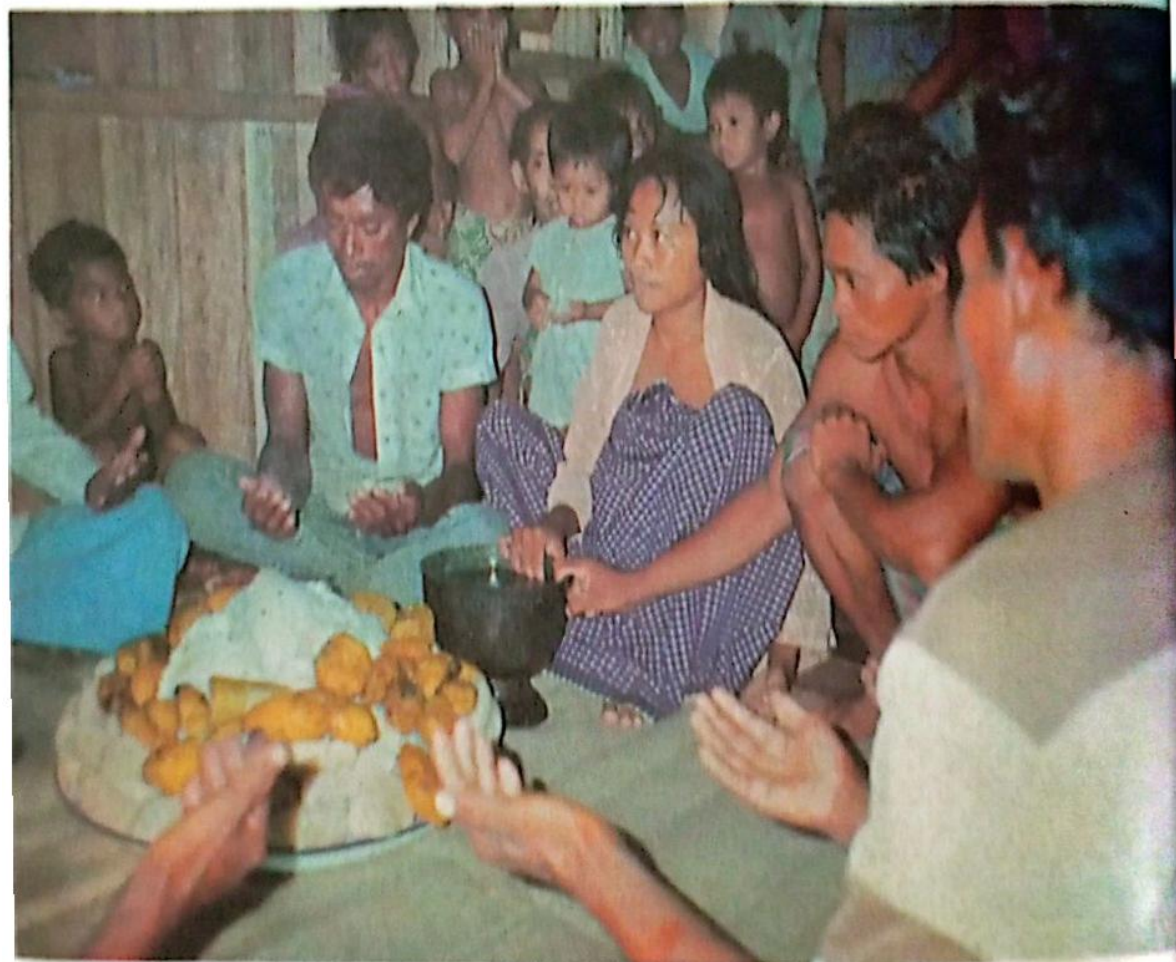


*In front of a sacred
place, the Badjao's
attitude is one of awe
and prayer. What
expresses most in the
scene is the abundant
vitality of the vegetation
world that celebrates the
mystery of life, real life,
the atahah kalluman.*



The sundok can be transformed to the point of becoming a life tableau. Here, the family head (with a cigarette) and his child are in a boat near the image of the wife (smaller, with turban).

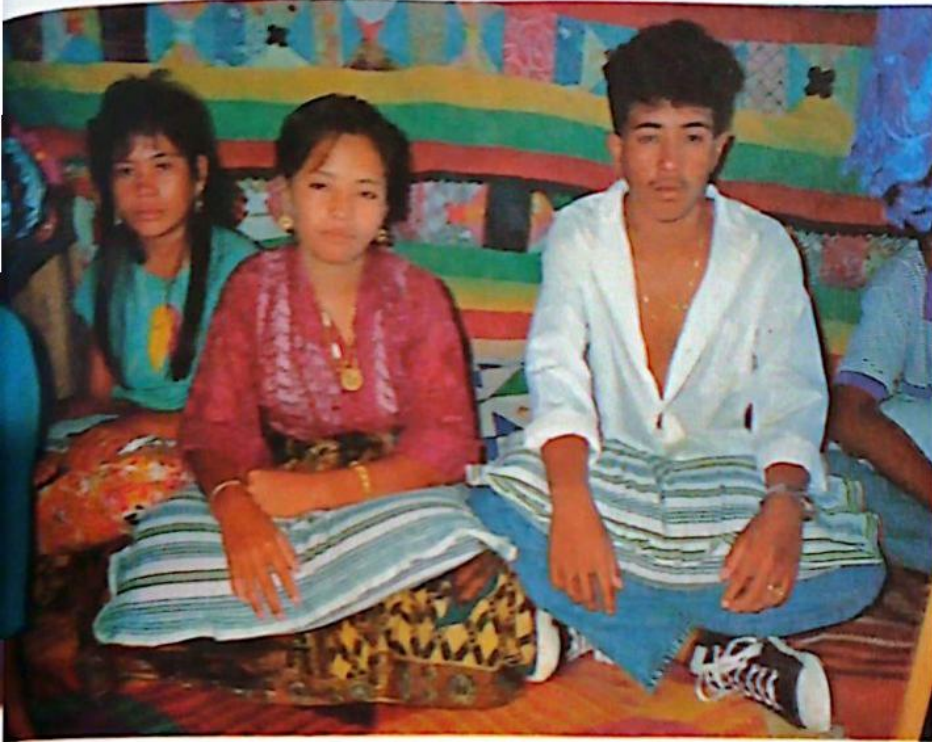
A great feast (left) involving the whole village always accompanies a great rite, thus further solemnizing the religious event.



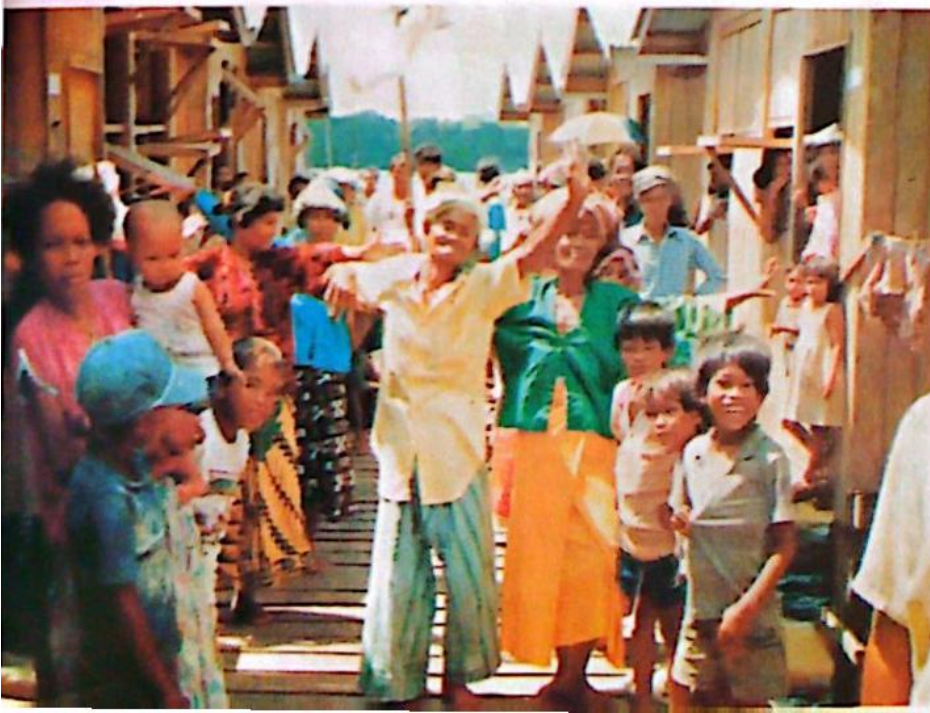
The pag-hinan ni Tuhan is an epiphany: in the symbols of water and rice the mystery of the genetrix is revealed.



In paying the dowry, discussion and argument are stimulated to visualize the contractual aspect of marriage.

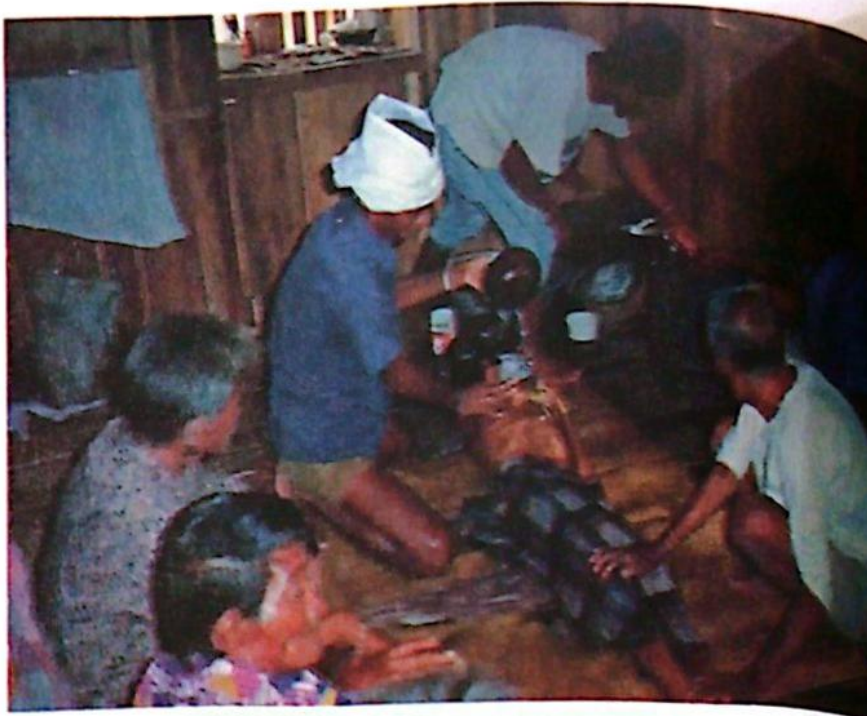


Husband and wife, solemn and still, receive congratulations and teasing remarks from relatives and friends.



The Igal-djin in trance performs his sacred dance at a wedding.

The funeral rite starts with a ritual bath—the “real” one. It recalls the symbolic connotations of the liberation bath.



A last prayer is said before the corpse is enclosed in a cocoon of tepoh.



At ground level, the grave is closed with boards, but not before the imam and his helpers remove their wrist cords and throw them into the grave.



Part Two

The Celebration

Rites and Feasts

LEX ORANDI, LEX CREDENDI. The law of prayer is the law of faith. True for all people, this is particularly true for the Badjaos who have no written tradition that collects their religious thought. Neither is there a formal oral tradition to which the experts can relate and through which they can transmit the faith of the community.

Badjao religious thought is maintained and expressed above all in prayer. The Badjao community believes as it prays. Moreover, in praying together with others, the individual is exposed to and formed in the belief of the community. This precedes individual belief and its explanations and interpretations. It is therefore in ritual practice that an understanding of Badjao religious thought must be found.

TRUE PRAYERS

The necessity of praying, for the Badjao, is not born out of the need to recall historical occurrences. With only one exception, it is not even born out of the need to celebrate natural recurrences, linked to the solar or lunar cycle. The exception is the Umboh Pai Baha-o, a rite quite extraordinary among the sea-oriented Badjaos. For their need to pray is fundamentally born of the necessity to celebrate the major events that mark the life cycle of a person, or in response to situations and incidents of collective and individual life.

Consequently, there is no "Badjao liturgical calendar," no established liturgical succession ordered in time. In this sense, praying for the Badjao is unplanned and occasional. This does not mean that it is disorganized and informal. On the contrary, it is highly formal. The Badjaos consider formal prayer much superior to personal prayer. Only formal prayer is "true" prayer—really powerful. Not surprisingly, Badjao religious practice presents a rich repertoire of true prayers. Attitudes, formulae, orientations of the body, ritual gestures and sequences, encoded in tradition, are available for the most varied occasions.

Searching for the Original Rite

All rites, even those of primary importance, can appear in a variety of derivative forms. The liturgical material, the actions, and the words remain fundamentally the same, but their composition can change. The very meaning of the rite can change. Much depends on the purpose for which it is celebrated. One can find himself witnessing some rites that are no longer connected with the original rite. These are new rites. They remain legitimate cultic forms, valid and efficacious; but in relation to the original rite, these derivative forms look like corruptions. They are ritual degradations.

Still, the derivative forms of a rite are the liturgies most often used and are often taken for the original rite. Among the variations of the *pag-umboh*, for example, the Umboh Pai Baha-o is undoubtedly the form that most clearly reveals the religious function and original significance of this rite. It develops two principal themes: the life of the group in the cult of the ancestors; and the life of vegetation. It is celebrated only once a year, on the occasion of the harvest of the new rice. The Umboh Pai and the Umboh Boa Saluka are derivatives and have no periodicity. They are celebrated whenever the need arises. In them, the religious function and the meaning of the original *pag-umboh* are less clear. They are conditioned by the need that generates the celebration.

However, whenever one speaks of celebrating a *pag-umboh*, one usually means the Umboh Pai or the Umboh Boa Saluka.

These forms of the pag-umboh are used as rites of intercession, almost exclusively when life is in danger, such as during sickness or childbirth.

For any sickness, the pag-umboh is considered the most effective panacea. It is the obvious response when expert diagnosis points to the sickness as a punishment from Umboh, irritated perhaps because the Umboh Pai Baha-o was not celebrated at the proper time, or because a tradition was not respected. But it is also celebrated when the healing-imams remain perplexed, without explanations and without solutions. Frequently, one does not even wait for their opinions. "Each time one gets sick, the first thing one thinks of is to do the pag-umboh." It is the prayer par excellence. One does it immediately, just in case. In practice, the pag-umboh is considered the primary and most efficacious healing ritual.

In the context of this new function, the form of the pag-umboh is modified. The sick person becomes the center of attention, the quintessential element of the entire liturgical action. From the start, the sick person lies down on the *tepoh* with the head towards the wall of the head, resting on pillows that delineate the front of the sacred space. Then, in the act of creating the pag-umboh, the person leading the rite first takes the coconut and, before placing it in the sacred space, briefly holds it over the head of the sick person and prays. In the local language, he apologizes for the possible mistakes that have caused the sickness, and invokes healing. Holding it high, about ten centimeters above the sick person, he then moves the coconut along the body down to the feet and back up to the head. He repeats the action three times and finally puts the coconut in the appropriate sacred space, behind the head of the sick person. The liturgical action is repeated with the other coconut or the basket of rice, according to the rite. The same is done with the bowl of incense.

During the days that Umboh remains in the house, the sick person must stay close to him. The obligation to "keep Umboh company" generally falls only on the sick person. From being a family event in its original form, the pag-umboh is reduced to a rather individual affair. During the night, the

privilege of staying "with the head close to Umboh" is accorded to the sick person. He or she takes the place of the elders and the family heads.

It is apparent that this pag-umboh is rather remote from the Umboh Pai Baha-o. The original religious function assumes the connotations of a healing ritual. As a rite for the sick, the structure itself undergoes a transformation. The images suggested by a symbolic reading of genealogy are overshadowed and lost.

The most radical transformations are found when this rite is used during childbirth. As soon as the pregnant woman begins to go into labor, the *panday's* invocations to Tuhan and Umboh are often complemented with the celebration of the pag-umboh. Though the *panday* is usually in charge of the rite, in an emergency anyone can celebrate it who knows how to do it.

The rules concerning the sacred time are set aside. The pag-umboh is created on the spur of the moment. One cannot always wait for the sun to be at its zenith, and the rite can even begin in the middle of the night. The pag-umboh is created with the rice and coconuts at hand, even if they are not always "perfect." Perhaps they could not be chosen carefully or kept in separate places. For the occasion the ritual prayers, mixed with other prayers in Arabic-sounding or local language, are repeated until the birth has taken place. It seems that Umboh is being called on again and again in an inexpressible yearning to ensure his presence and help.

In the pag-umboh celebrated during childbirth, the cosmic dimensions also become a weak, far-away echo.

Searching for the Representative Rite

Once one has recognized the forms closest to the original rites, there still remains the problem of determining their relative importance. Alongside the primary rites are a seemingly endless number of rites that can be described as minor. A Badjao knows the difference. Not so with the non-Badjaos who might attribute to the latter a value they do not have and identify them as typifying Badjao rituality.

But the great majority of the *minor rites* by themselves offer a very limited and rather distorted image of the structure of the Badjao's ritual and religious mind. They appear as a series of techniques, unsophisticated or not, used to gain admittance to and possession of the sacred power. Their main purpose seems to be to free one from evil or find a response to daily needs. An observer could get the impression that the Badjao religion does not know of an anthropology that goes beyond an immanentistic vision of life.

Still, the minor rites are the easiest to stumble onto. One need only go around a Badjao village at any time of the day or night. These rites can be celebrated in any setting. But above all they are numerous. They cover nearly all the daily needs from the simplest, like winning the heart of a girl or making a good trade in the market, to the most serious concerns, like regaining health. The last, the healing rituals, deserve separate treatment.

Only a study of the major rites—described from now on as “the great rites”—can correct first impressions. Only these show how the Badjao religion is on the same wavelength as the great religions and is organized around a vision of life centered on the transcendental. Indeed, the *pag-umboh* is in this sense a revelation. It affirms that salvation can be found only in an order that goes beyond the human, in a sacred anthropology defined and realized in *Umboh*. The great rites all move within the ambit of these same convictions. No longer tied to the urgency of daily needs, the Badjao religious man seeks in the great rites to project, realize, and express his existence beyond an individual self. He places himself within the ambit of the sacred, found most of all in the *cosmos*. These are ultimately the true Badjao rites, best typifying Badjao religiosity.

Unlike the minor rites, the celebrations of the great rites are rather rare. First, they are not numerous, hardly a dozen. They are also rather complex and require a conspicuously organized effort. And they are expensive, to be celebrated only when absolutely needed. Finally, there are some which have an effect that is presumed to be ineffaceable. They cannot therefore be repeated.

An observer—especially a traveler in a hurry—could hardly stumble onto one of these celebrations. Besides being infrequent, they are also difficult to gain access to. First of all, one can never count on prior planning. The celebration of these rites, up to the last moment, can always be postponed. Unlike the minor rites, in fact, the celebration of the great rites is conditioned by a series of sociological constraints and, above all, by cosmic alignments. Aside from the proper time, they strive for "the fullness of time." One must often wait for months for one of these celebrations, with no success. What the traveler in a hurry, and at times even experts in the social sciences, miss is the cosmic character of Badjao religiosity.

But this cosmic character is decisive by its presence or absence. It distinguishes the great rite from the minor rite—the rite which is typical of the Badjao religious man, from a rite that can go well for any religious man. It distinguishes the Badjao way of worship from that of the neighboring people, Muslim or Christian. In the final analysis, the great rite characterizes the Badjao religion and distinguishes it from the great Islamic and Christian religious traditions. Islam and Christianity are fundamentally historical religions, whereas Badjao religiosity develops on a cosmic background.

The rite in which this cosmic character can be most easily observed is perhaps the Umboh Pai Baha-o because it is linked with the annual cycle. It is essentially the only such rite; the other great rites are connected more to existential situations. To refine the cosmic character of the Umboh Pai Baha-o, the Badjaos use the daily solar cycle, in lieu of the annual solar cycle. Two moments in particular stand out: morning and midday.

It is worth remembering that the pag-umboh, which begins at midday, always ends in the morning. Some of the great rites can only be celebrated in the morning, very early as the sun rises.

This is another reason why some of the great Badjao rites are difficult for the visitor to see. To the difficulties imposed by the cosmic constraints, one must add waking up early in the morning. Visitors may tend not to wake up early just to attend some Badjao rites, which one is not even sure will be celebrated. But the timetables of the Badjao religious man

are set by the sun. They are not the timetables of the secular man, much less of the tourist.

Before describing the great rites, it is useful to highlight three recurring elements of the Badjao ritual. The first is the morning, which dramatizes and gives a particular meaning to some of the great rites. The second is water, which is used in various minor as well as major rites and acquires a particular meaning in the setting of the morning. The third is the feast, which is an element that accompanies and enhances the value of all the great Badjao rites.

THE MORNING

The temporal span that extends between the last shades of the night and the instant in which the sun begins to appear on the horizon is first of all a time of separation. It distinguishes the night from the day, the primordial separation from which all dualism originates. And it is a time of passage: it spans the abyss between the night and the day and symbolizes the bridge that crosses all abysses.

The night with its darkness and the day with its light are two sides of the first great antithesis. It symbolizes those realities that more clearly define themselves through contrast and in opposition. In antithesis, what is found on the side of the day and of the light is extolled. Some polarities, like the following, are particularly significant for the Badjaos:

Night	-	Day
Darkness	-	Light
Past	-	Present
Inactivity	-	Activity
Private life	-	Associated life
Informal	-	Formal
Chaos	-	Order
Nothingness	-	Creation
Nonexistence	-	Existence
Death	-	Life
Throng of the dead	-	Ancestor
Ignorance	-	Knowledge

Opposite realities, but related. They describe a sequence, a progression. The morning is therefore both a time and a symbol of passage, not just any passage but the passage from the negative to the positive. The symmetries above describe and develop a passage with optimistic implications: a path full of hope that moves from grief to gladness, from despair to joy. It announces new realities. It foresees all re-creations, rebirths, and resurrections. It evokes and makes present the primordial time of creation.

It is in this morning scenario that the Badjao religious man places ritual distinctions and transitions: the distinction between the old man and the new, and the passage from one to the other; the distinction between the sick man and the healthy man, and the process of healing; the distinction between nonbeing and being, and the passage from death to rebirth; the distinction between existence with the dead and life with the ancestors. In order to create new forms, the Badjao religious man inserts himself into the cosmic process of re-creation.

Initiatory Dimension

The distinctive characteristic of this context is its initiatory dimension, which carries the germinative potentials of an environment that can yield various re-creations. It can be considered an element of the rite, in this case serving to describe the particular dynamic that fosters a re-creation.

All the great Badjao rites have an initiatory dimension, not always easily discerned. At times, it may be hidden in blurred images or behind themes that occupy, by right or by corruption, a major role in the rite. But this is not always so. Often this dimension stands out clearly and distinctly and may be the very reason that justifies the rite.

The initiatory dimension can take various forms, the most significant being those of the morning. They assume a paradigmatic value and are developed against the background of the Badjao cosmos, not yet desacralized. Here, the visible and accessible are only a sign, a finger pointed towards something unseen and mysterious: the sacred as it is. Each initiatory

activity, therefore, is a mystagogical process that proceeds from the visible to the invisible, from the meaning to what it means.

There is first of all a gnosiological dimension. The passage from darkness to light sparks the idea of a passage from ignorance to knowledge. Staged in the morning celebration, the rite is perceived as a revelation of hidden realities, an introduction to that knowledge which can be aptly defined as "the Badjao mysteries." These are mysteries on which the initiand reflects, recognizes self, and assumes an image of self.

The mysteries are sacred forms that produce what they signify. In them, the initiand is transformed. In the mystagogical process, therefore, there is also a maieutical dimension. It brings to light new ways of being as new persons.

This dimension is developed on the symbolic stage of night-to-new day with liturgical activity that sets out from the borders of the night. Thus, the night enters as part of the rite, assuming two distinct connotations. First of all, the night annihilates all forms and becomes in the rite an agent of death, the initiatory death that is the *sine qua non* for the new to be born. In the night, as the role and status of a person become irrelevant, the old person dies. In the night, as human associations dissolve, so does the society of which the old person was part.

The second connotation is that of the night as the place, the receptacle, in which creation happens. The night is like a maternal womb where life is woven together in silence and secrecy. It will be up to the morning to bring life to birth and to light.

With this second connotation, primordial time is superimposed on the rite. This is the time of the first, great creation. For the Badjao who lives in the present and does not know a historical depth, the time "at the beginning of time" is very near. In the context of the morning, it can become accessible. Here, night re-presents primordial chaos; and morning, the dawn of times and the advent of the first cosmogony.

The Sun

In the morning, a particular orientation becomes important, centering on sunrise. The point at which the sun rises

is the place from which the light is born and distinction begins: the generative point. The ritual role of the morning sun, however, is less significant than that of the midday sun; it *only* appears explicitly in the opening rites.

The sun is the great star that divides the day in two parts and delineates Badjao religious life. To sense its impact, one must see it on the seas of the equator where dawn is brief and its rise from the horizon can be measured. On a background of light vapors, it is an ochre-colored wheel, huge and most imposing.

THE WATER

What is said of the rice is also true for the water. "There is no rite without water." And in reality, in one way or another, water is found almost everywhere. As a symbolic reality, it gives voice to several values. Much depends upon the context. It can be found as one element beside many others in a ritual sequence, as in the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan about which we shall speak later on. But it can impose itself as the principal element constitutive of the rite itself. This is the case of the ritual baths, where the entire liturgical action is built around water symbology.

Waters of Liberation

Any hygienic bath can assume a religious dimension. As it cleanses away dirt, it also cleanses one from possible negative influences. These can be at work even when not yet noticed. One never knows, so a bath always does good. It washes everything away.

The religious dimension stands out more clearly when evil becomes noticeable. When a child cries, it is a sign that something is wrong. Perhaps someone is speaking ill of it or trying to harm it. The child may already be sick from someone's evil intent. The spiritual efficacy of a bath, in this case, is precious. The child is given a good bath. It is first of all a ritual bath to liberate the child from evil influence.

These ritual baths, which can be described as "liberation baths," can be taken at will any time of the day. But they become more meaningful and are given more frequently during the night. This religious custom has two different explanations. Some believe that because evil persons work more effectively at night, the antidote must be applied then in order to be efficacious. Others believe the opposite. Because the person intent on doing harm is distracted or asleep, this person will not notice the means used by the sick person to shake off the mesh of evil. Free from possible pressures, the liberation bath becomes more efficacious.

Besides this first distinction between night and day, one can find many others. As variables, each enters the composition of the various liberation baths, defining with solemnity a particular efficacy. For example, the bath can be taken with or without assistance. It appears to be superior when done by a second person who functions as liturgist. Any person can perform this function. An imam, however, always remains the liturgist *par excellence*.

These baths also vary a lot in form. In less demanding situations, the form can be so simple that the ritual bath can hardly be distinguished from a hygienic bath. This can be the case when a child cries for no apparent reason at all. The mother puts the child in the basin and, as if giving a routinary little daily bath, she washes the child and speaks to its spirit, perhaps even invoking the ancestors and the major spirits.

However, the basic typology of the bath should be sought among the most complex and structured forms. In general, the rite is done in the sea, using a ladder fixed between the hut and the tidal flat. The person receiving the bath goes down to water level. From a boat, or holding onto the same ladder, the imam positions himself beside the person. With a ceramic bowl, he takes some water and, praying, pours it slowly on the needy person. The liturgical action is usually repeated three times. Various customs may follow the rite proper. If done during the day, for example, the imam sometimes ends by throwing the bowl into the sea. From the way it falls to the bottom, various omens are read. The bowl is recovered by the person who underwent the rite, thus completing the ritual bath

with a hygienic bath, getting a full cleansing. These are simple customs and should not be given too much importance.

All these baths appear to be used as antidotes to sicknesses that can be described as real, but inferior. These are sicknesses that can be caused consciously or unconsciously, perhaps with the use of magic, sorcery, or spells, but which always remain of the human order because of their human origin.

However, some sicknesses are caused by the superior spirits, who strike with various motives. Maybe they were disrespected, or they want to be remembered. This second category of sicknesses is serious, "the real, grave sicknesses." Against these sicknesses, there is no bath whatsoever that can be of any use.

This contrasts with the situation among the neighboring ethnic groups like the Sama, who have baths that can be described as "for purification." For example, there is a bath that, though considered by the most strict Muslims as "non-Islamic," takes place each year, around the month of August. In groups, under the guidance of an imam, the people go down to the sea. After having gathered some stones, each throws them behind him, as a sign of renouncing his own sinful past. Then, they festively wash themselves. The intent of this bath is to cleanse and purify. Occasionally, some Badjaos participate in these baths, thinking perhaps that these baths can do them good.

Among the Badjaos as such, however, there seem to be no real purification baths. Even in some baths where the theme of purification seems implicit, it does not appear very developed. The concept of purification itself seems problematic. True, with the liberation bath one gets rid of the realities that pollute. But so-called "sin" in the sense of moral fault is not present among these realities. Moral fault does not seem to be perceived by the Badjao as a reality that pollutes, as a sort of dirt on the soul which one cleanses away with a purification bath.

Moral fault is perceived above all in its dimension as offense or error, voluntary or involuntary. It always offends, and every offense must be compensated, particularly those against the superior spirits. There is no way out. Here, one can help

oneself only by satisfying the desires of the spirit. One must, first of all, get to know these desires and then satisfy them adequately with rites and prayers of apology, expiation, remembrance, and so on.

The liberation baths are not only powerless against the action of the spirit, they can even be counterproductive. Because no human cunning, tricks, or tinsel could ever be effective here, recourse to the bath in order to free oneself from the grip of the spirit betrays a rebellious attitude, as well as an underestimation of the power of the spirit involved. So that there might be no hint of suspicion that a hygienic bath is being used for religious purposes, once a sickness is diagnosed as real, no bath is taken at all. Until they are healed, those suffering from a real sickness do not wash themselves.

Waters of Power and Life

In order to return to regular bathing, to reenter the daily routine, to reenter society, persons who had just been sick must be recognized as really healed. This is not a simple recognition on the diagnostic level. It is a ritual recognition, a real rite of passage, and requires another kind of bath. This takes a form similar to the liberation bath, but with two important differences. There are now strict requirements regarding the liturgist and, above all, regarding the time in which this bath is administered. This gives a new meaning, radically different.

In contrast to the liberation bath, in this bath the requirements for the liturgist are well defined and extremely restrictive. One cannot take this bath alone. It must be administered by the healing-imam who successfully diagnosed the sickness and presided over the healing process. He is the one who first recognized the spirit involved and its desires, and only he can competently diagnose if the spirit has been satisfied and the sick person is healed. The healing process, like the real sickness (it is a fact of the spiritual order), is a cultic process where this bath is only the final part. Propriety therefore demands that this process be concluded by the same liturgist who has presided over it from the beginning. One can easily imagine the relevant anthropological consequences that may

originate from these religious customs. The healing-imam is recognized and placed above everyone as a man of the sacred. He has a unique role as a real *umboh*, a giver of life.

Much more important than those for the healing-imam are the requirements for the time. This bath must be done in the morning, with the arrival of light and the rising of the sun. This is clearly an initiatory setting. Unlike all the other baths, this is rightly described as an "initiation bath."

The Badjaos reveal its significance by showing the reasons why it is given. At the end of a sickness, people are weak and exhausted, their strength depleted, "with the joints disconnected, the flesh without strength." They cannot even go down to the water to wash themselves. They cannot move around the village or go into the forest to get wood. Badjaos add, they are "too weak to go about under the green." They explain that the sacred power of the forest would destroy the sick person. The ailing must first be made strong again.

We are speaking here about a bath with particular implications. It is not for the purpose of liberating, like the bath described above. Rather, it is for rebuilding, giving back strength, revitalizing. The waters used in it, consequently, are not the waters that loosen bonds. They assume a new connotation. They are the waters of life.

In truth, for the Badjaos, water is life. They are a people without land who on land have no rights and cannot enjoy its fruit. On the sea, they find their haven. On the sea, they find mobility, freedom, and dignity. From the sea they get their means of sustenance. Like the fish, the Badjaos live on the sea.

But it is freshwater which in particular means life. It is not easily found. The islands among which the Badjaos move are mostly coral, flat and sandy with few springs and hardly any capacity to retain rainwater. Drinking water is bought, but money is scarce. The only free water flows down from the roofs of their huts when it rains. When rain comes, they run out and hurriedly set out buckets and containers of all kinds to collect the water.

For the Badjao religious man, water becomes one of the most intense discourses on the true life, the *atahah kalluman*. In the Badjao religion, this life is everything. It is the sacred itself. In fact, it is both power and life. "Water is never absent" in the rites because it signifies what the Badjao is seeking in the rite.

As a symbol, water sustains life because, first and foremost, it is the very "source" of life. The water of the coconut, from which the tree is born, suggests it. The water of the womb, from which man is born, says it best of all. First cousins of paternal descent are not allowed to get married. Because they have the same origin, it would be incest. As the Badjaos say, "They are children of the same water." Regardless of the reference to the paternal side, water stands for the origin. The gestation of physical birth happens in the water, and thus all other gestations.

The morning also marks the various gestations, particularly physical birth, which is called "coming to light." Likewise, physical birth marks the morning. With the morning comes the "birth" of a new day. In the background, one finds the morning of the time of the "birth" of the world. In this context, the morning waters reveal their ultimate generative potency: they have a special relationship to the waters of physical gestation, as well as to primordial waters.

Consequently, the waters of what we have called the initiation bath have the power, as the Badjao images suggest, to reassemble and rejoin the members disconnected by sickness. They can give back strength to the man who has been depleted and exhausted by sickness. They have the power to reinsert man into creation. Because they are the morning waters, they have the power to "regenerate."

Introducing the Great Rite

There is another type of morning bath, the one which begins all the great rites. For convenience it will be called the "opening bath." It is a typical rite of the morning, similar to the initiation bath. However, it is not done separately but is incorporated in the structure of the rite it serves to introduce.

The scenery for this bath is therefore different; there is an audience. The proportions also change; it is more solemn. It allows an exception, as we will see in the opening bath to a marriage.

It takes place in the vicinity of the hut in which the great rite will be celebrated. The evening before, some containers of water, not necessarily fresh water, are prepared. To the side, the musicians arrange themselves. Even before the light starts to appear, the music begins. It calls the people to assemble. It will continue as accompaniment during the entire rite and the brief celebrations that follow.

Once the people, half-asleep and hardly dressed, have gathered, the imam and the initiand arrive. The initiand is guided into a crouching position beside the containers of water, and is made to face east towards the sunrise. The imam stands behind the initiand. The bath proper follows. The imam takes some water from the containers with a bowl and, praying, slowly pours it on the head of the initiand. He takes great care that it drips down to wet the whole body. To make sure that it does, sometimes the imam or some zealous women spread the water and scrupulously wash the initiand. The liturgical action is repeated at least three times and often up to seven. After the bath, the initiand stands up, wipes up, and, under a *hōs*, changes and puts on festive clothes.

This is the basic typology, but there may be variations and additions depending on the scrupulousness or whim of the imam, the nature of the rite, or the persons involved. The rite could be celebrated for only one person, for a couple, or for several persons. The age and gender of the initiand are relevant: a child requires different treatment. For a woman, before pouring the water on her head, the imam often picks out a strand from her loose hair, holds it up and blows on it, moving his head as if pushing his breath along the strand towards the woman's head. This is a way of communicating spiritual power through the breath. Some imams will continue to hold the strand as they pour the water on the woman's head, as if seeking solidarity and offering her support.

The structure of the opening bath defines a model that is replicated or partly imitated in other baths with different

meanings and degrees of importance. It can be replicated in the initiation bath at the end of a sickness or, outside an initiatory context, in a liberation bath. At other times, some aspects only are imitated. In the liberation baths, one sometimes places oneself in the direction of the point of sunrise, even if the bath takes place at night. Because this is also done in the morning, the non-Badjao could easily confuse one bath with another or to reduce the various baths to a common function and significance. But they are radically different from one another. A liberation bath, for example, remains such even if done in the morning. In case of a real sickness, it cannot be done.

The opening bath has its own specific function—it serves as the introduction to a great rite. It also has a meaning of its own. Given this setting, one might conclude that it is a kind of purification bath. As indicated above, the Badjaos do not seem to have a concern for moral purification.

First of all, the waters of this bath show the symbolic connotations of the liberation baths. This is not easily discernible, unless one remains aware, as we will see, that the great rites that follow are rites of passage. Rites that develop on the basis of initiatory models directly or indirectly presuppose a death. With this in mind, many apparently insignificant details become relevant, and the significance of the bath as liberating becomes more evident.

The initiand does not wear western clothes but wears the *hôs*, usually worn at home at night. It offers much freedom of movement and is commonly used when bathing. Though it is not tied very tightly, it is loosened a little, as always hinted by the imam, before the ritual bath. When the initiand is a woman, even the hair is loosened. The imam conscientiously combs his fingers through the hair to be sure that there are no knots.

These loosening take place in the cosmic scenario of the early morning. They point particularly towards the night, still lingering with its shadows, from which the community and the initiand are just awakening and emerging. In this context, the loosening give the waters of the ritual bath a further significance. They become the waters in which the forms of one as the old person are dissolved, freed from one's past

and from one's social identity. These are the waters of death. The initiand must undergo death so that the creation of the new person can take place.

The waters of the opening bath have a further and very important meaning. They evoke those valences found in the initiation bath, which strengthen and revitalize those weakened by the sickness so that they may be capable of facing social and cosmic forces without being annihilated. The purpose of the opening bath is also to strengthen and revitalize, but in this instance in order to energize a person for a special encounter with the sacred. The bath therefore does not have the simple purpose of bringing a weakened person back to normalcy. Its purpose is to raise the energies of the person of normal human strength who is not yet sufficiently strong to meet the sacred. In a certain sense, he must surpass himself in order to enter without danger into the sacred adventure of the rite of passage: to die in order to be reborn a new creature.

Opening Bath

The opening bath is a rite of preparation and therefore not the most important part of the entire liturgical sequence. The rite of the great re-creation will come only afterwards. Because anticipation is focused on the great moment to follow, the initiatory value of the opening bath cannot but receive less attention. An observer might undervalue it to the point of questioning its basic structure. One could think that it takes place in the morning only because it functions as introduction to a morning rite.

The sequence of the wedding is a case that reveals the bath's importance as a morning rite. As will be seen, the wedding itself is always celebrated at midday. But the spouses undergo a bath that does not take place simply "before" the wedding. It takes place in the morning. In the wedding, as in the majority of the great rites, the opening bath has its own time. It is properly a morning rite.

Several details common to all the opening baths further emphasize their morning character. In arranging the initiand

for the bath, the imam positions him or her towards the east at the point where the sun rises. He stands behind the initiand, facing in the same direction. At times, the importance of this orientation becomes very explicit. For example, even before the imam and the initiand arrive, those who help in the preparation and arrange the liturgical material, search between the huts for an open space from which one can see the pathway of the rising sun. In addition, before pouring the water, the imam addresses the initiand, points to the place of the sunrise, and invites the initiand to look in that direction.

In this liturgical detail, the opening bath is enriched with a cosmic dimension. The cosmic scenario is centered on the point at the horizon where the sun rises. Thus, the sun is given a central role in the rite. Though still invisible, the sun is ultimately the director. The sun generates the morning and, throughout the morning, gives to the waters a generative power that will then transform the initiand and enable him to face the great rite to follow.

Indirectly, this cosmic scenario becomes the framework of the great rite itself. The opening bath, while keeping its original character and significance, remains a rite of entrance. It is the first of the sequential activities that structure the great rite, the real rite of passage. By its precise timing, the opening bath carries the symbolism that otherwise cannot be represented in the great rite. It is primarily through the opening bath that the solar orientation enters and contributes to the re-creation.

THE FEAST

When asked to enumerate their rites according to importance, the Badjaos may present different priorities. Among their criteria, one element reappears: the kind of *feast* that accompanies the rite. Based on this, the wedding tends to come up ahead of the other rites, surpassing even the Umboh Pai Baha-o which, from a strictly religious point of view, should be the greatest Badjao celebration.

The feast is not merely an embellishment. In the momentousness of the religious event, it plays a decisive role. The rite proper can be very short, with only the imam and the persons for whom the rite is performed participating in the liturgical action, while relatives and friends assist. The village could remain absent if not for the feast. Through the feast, the celebration of the rite becomes a social event and a landmark in the life of the whole village.

Beyond its communal significance, the feast is seen as an integral part of the rite itself, arranged as an extension of the main liturgical action. For example, the care given to providing enough rice to nourish all those who will participate in the feast is thought of as a religious concern; that rice is part of the offering presented to the spirits. Some ways of organizing the feast assume the value of sacred rules. In weddings, for example, the sound of the *agong* with the other two instruments is a proviso that cannot be compromised.

The relatives of the person for whom the rite is being performed take care of the feast's organization. They pay the expenses, which can be substantial. Wealth and social status, which one occupies or aspires to, help determine how elaborate the feast will be. Some feasts even make history. But even the expenses of modest feasts are not negligible.

These expenses can have a decisive impact on the times and ways in which some rites are celebrated. A celebration could be continually postponed because there is no money for the feast. This is particularly true for weddings, but also for many other rites whose purpose is to fulfill promises to the spirits and therefore should be celebrated as soon as possible to avoid incurring further anger from them. To economize, sometimes several rites are celebrated together on a single occasion. These clustered rites may be done for the people of the same family or different families. The expenses for the feast are then divided amongst them.

To announce the celebration of a rite and to create a festive atmosphere, the *ula-ula*—Badjao banners—are raised on bamboo poles high above the village. They are great square

standards with two long strips extending from the open side to outline an acute triangle. Do they reproduce, in a stylized way, the form of a human body? Against the background of Badjao liturgical life, these banners would evoke: (1) the body of the person who lies down with the head near the sacred matter during the pag-umboh, the rite that stands at the center of the Badjao liturgical life; (2) the Badjao social body that is celebrated in the pag-umboh and achieves transcendence in Umboh; (3) Umboh himself and everything he sacralizes.

The ula-ula is placed in front of the hut that will be at the center of the celebrations. For weddings, a similar, smaller banner is raised on the bow of the boat that leads the bridegroom's flotilla when he goes to fetch the bride at the start of the nuptial celebrations. There are few ula-ula. Usually they are borrowed. Those who have them treasure them as a sign of family nobility.

Sometimes, a hut is adorned as a receiving room for potential guests. The best tepoh are laid on the floor. Curtains and multicolored batiks are hung on the walls, a custom that presents an opportunity to show off the beautiful things one has, or can borrow. The room can be in the hut of the person for whom the rite is celebrated or in the hut of the one responsible for the organization and payment of the expenses of the feast. It can also be in the house of the imam where the rite will take place.

In practice, one wonders about the true function of these rooms. Potential guests do not include the persons of the village who have their own houses. Those invited from other villages stay with friends and acquaintances. These receiving rooms seem to have a similar function as the banners. They serve to announce and create an atmosphere. Do they evoke past pageantry? These decorations usually do not last long; the huts have to serve for the activities of daily life. Often these short-lived creations are clumsy imitations, an attempt to deny a poverty which, in the end, cannot be hidden.

During the feasts, there must be music. The most important musical instrument is the agong, a bronze gong. Also well-used is the *kulintang*, a set of gongs of various sizes bound

by two very tightly stretched cords. Sometimes one can also hear the *gabbang*, a sort of bamboo xylophone. Often these instruments are extremely crude. Only their basic structure shows a tenuous semblance to their classic models. As percussion instruments, even some old plastic containers or buckets can be used.

Beside the hut of the celebration, these instruments beat out the unwinding of the feast. Formally, they can be heard each time one enters a ritual or pararitual activity. On these occasions, there must be three instruments used, always including the *agong*. Early in the morning, they awaken and call together the people of the village. Music is most important during the rite proper, but it can also be heard afterwards at random at any hour of the day, around the village. It is played in a rather easygoing way, as entertainment for the youth.

On simpler occasions, the feast lasts for only one day. It begins early in the morning, just before the opening bath, and continues until shortly after the rite. Except for weddings which take place at midday, feasts subside during the day and pick up again vigorously in the evening, after suppertime.

On more serious occasions, the celebrations begin the previous evening when relatives and friends arrive from distant villages. They contribute to creating a festive atmosphere. They arrive the evening before to be present at the first rites in the morning. The feast in this case extends over two nights.

In the case of a wedding, the feast can be extended to three nights. On the first night, the feast celebrates the arrival of the groom with his retinue, and the payment of the dowry. After the wedding proper on the second day, the feast continues in honor of the newly married couple. The cycle of the celebrations may conclude on the third evening, depending on local customs. This type of extended feast may also accompany other rites, depending on the wishes and resources of the one who organizes the feast.

In all cases, the feast is most festive in the evening after suppertime when the people, free from the day's tasks, can relax before going to bed.

During the day, the feast provides a festive background for those directly involved in the rite, but is not a communal gathering. The evening is the time to gather the community for the feast. A large area is prepared, in a more open corner of the village or a plot of land not far away. One does not need much to organize it. The basic requirement is lighting—two or three lanterns on a bar, or hung on some coconut tree. Eventually the moon will provide the light. "When there is a full moon, the Badjaos celebrate." They do not celebrate the moon but make use of its light, especially during the full moon.

After sunset, the people slowly make their way to the feast. Men dress casually, usually wearing their work clothes. Women try to dress up, especially those who intend to take part in the dances. For the young women, feasts are great occasions for showing themselves off and finding a husband. In their *hôs* and *sabra*, they make a spectacle of exotic designs and colors—red, bright orange, green, violet, blue. One can even see the *janggal*, long metal nails that dancers wear on their fingers.

At first, people are shy and must be prodded to dance. Then, after a while, it will not take long before one has to compete to take part. In the small space left open among the people who sit and watch, dancing is done in groups of four or five at a time. Only when the tired give up can another enter. Grasping the *hôs* around the hips, one jumps into the open space. The gentle movements of the *pang-igal* continue while the music plays on without interruption.

The organizer of the feast makes sure that the people enjoy themselves and that no quarrels take place. He keeps his eye on the rowdiest children and sees that the musicians have plenty of cigarettes and soft drinks. For the music, one is usually content with the traditional percussion instruments, played with a lot of humor. But when somebody wants to show off, he can engage a so-called "musical group," at times even from Malaysia, including a singer accompanied by a cassette tape recorder. Electricity is provided by a car battery.

The persons for whom the rite and the feast are celebrated are not given special attention. They are greeted, but nothing more. The exception is the wedding, when a place of honor is prepared for the new couple, on a tepoh in the front row among the people. They sit on a bench, or on pillows. In the course of the evening, the new wife will be invited to dance, almost always alone. Otherwise, she spends the time with her husband, seated solemn and still. This is a way to distinguish themselves from the crowd and rise above the ordinary.

For the majority of the people, the evening lasts only for a few hours. Each one then goes home to sleep. The day after will be a day of work like every other day. Only the young remain to continue enjoying themselves until the first hours of the morning.

The Badjao feast by itself has not much to offer. And what is offered does not have great originality. But it is important. A great rite would not be great without the feast.

8

The Great Rites of the Morning

THE CRUCIAL ELEMENT of the great rites of the morning is their placement in time. They are celebrated at the moment of sunrise and the birth of a new day, a vista that evokes and makes present the first day of creation. Outside this time, the rituals would be corrupted. As the Badjaos say, "They would lose their efficacy."

Corruption can come in a more subtle way. The Badjaos may forget why these rites should be celebrated at that precise moment. Though they continue to take place in the morning, they assume new meanings, as rites of expiation, thanksgiving, intercession, ex-voto and so on. With the deterioration of the meaning, the structure also decays.

These degradations are inevitable. Unlike other rites, the symbolic system of the great rites of the morning is not found exclusively incorporated and expressed in the liturgical sequence. A large part of their symbolic system, perhaps the most significant, is found in the context. It is precisely in the morning cosmic scenario, which functions as background to the liturgical sequence, that the structure and significance of these rites take shape.

rites of passage

Against the backdrop of cosmic transition—from night to day, from darkness to light, from past to present—the rites

take the shape of rites of passage: liturgical actions suitable to generate transitions. They are meant to move a person, clearly and surely, from one mode of being to another, from one stage of life to another.

Against the model of cosmic transition, they have a dialectic structure. In the same way that the course of time is divided into nights and days, the rites of the morning mark distinctive moments in the course of life. Between these distinctions, then, they facilitate the transition to the new from the ruins of the old, just as the day comes from the ruins of the night. The final result is not the fruit of evolution, nor is it a form superimposed on the preceding forms. It is instead a new reality, as of a new creature coming directly from the hands of Tuhan.

These ritual transitions or re-creations are fundamentally events of a religious nature. They are religious rites, celebrated by religious leaders to accomplish religious objectives. The need that moves the religious man is the longing for the sacred—to be in contact with, saturated by, immersed and lost in the sacred, the only true reality. These rites ultimately serve as liturgical actions that celebrate the passage from unreality to reality, from death and the unreality of natural man to rebirth in the reality of the supernatural or sacred man.

In one way or another, all the great rites of the morning incorporate initiatory themes. The means may be external, like those suggested by the background, or internal, like those that describe the process of re-creation itself. As a whole, they can be described as "initiations." However, for reasons of clarity and to fully appreciate the religious forms to be described, it is useful to maintain the generic term, "great rites of the morning." These can be subdivided into "rites of renewal" and "rites of initiation."

The Rites of Renewal

The rites of renewal aim to restore persons troubled by some serious existential situation. Examples of these rites can be found also in other settings, outside the morning: simple liturgical actions like the ritual change of clothing or the ritual

cutting of hair. In these minor rites, the external forms, like a person's appearances, are renewed. They serve to satisfy a djin-spirit and, indirectly, to help any person in difficulty.

The morning rites of renewal are more complex and dramatic than those renewal rites done at other times of the day. The morning renewal rites act directly on a person and his situation to effect a radical re-creation. As we will see in the Pag-timbang, the rite completely renews a person. Among other things, this rite helps visualize the sacred perspective that serves as background and further radicalizes all re-creations, rites of initiation included.

In spite of its name, the rite of renewal does not result in only the mending of a past situation or the healing of a person. As miraculous as these may be, they remain within the realm of the human. This rite is a sacred event, conferring a sacred identity that brings into being a real person, real because one is in the realm of the sacred and out of danger because one has left the unreality of the human.

From a broader perspective, the rite can be said to renew because it restores the sacred, once lost, and returns one to the original ideal state. A person so renewed regains his or her original identity, temporarily lost.

The Rites of Initiation

On the other hand, the rites of initiation function specifically to move persons from one social position to another, establishing them in a particular status with specific rights and obligations designated by tradition. Here, initiands are enabled to fulfill responsibilities that they could never have taken upon themselves before. These responsibilities are ultimately of a religious nature.

Entrance into the new social status is not regarded as a superimposition or investiture which adds to a person's previous situation. On the contrary, the various actions that constitute the liturgical sequence of each initiation produces a process of formation. Symbolically, the initiand is properly molded in his new existential role and completely re-created on the cosmic background.

This re-creation is more radical than that of the rite of renewal. Renewal appears to be a return that annihilates the effects of inopportune changes and reestablishes one in his previous status in the sacred order of life. The rite of initiation appears more as a movement forward to status on a higher plane, in a mode of being that the initiand had previously never known.

This is always a sacred re-creation. The Badjao community, amidst whom the liturgical event is celebrated, and the initiand, reshaped, is an ideal sacred whole, a mystical body that finds as its head, Umboh, its unity and identity.

All the great rites of the morning, even those of renewal, have a social dimension. First of all, they are never celebrated in private. All members of the community are invited to take part. Moreover, in these celebrations the community rediscovers the system of beliefs and values that maintain social stability and promote the solidarity of the group.

In the rites of initiation, the social dimension stands out more clearly. While the rites of renewal act upon an individual as a private person, the rites of initiation act upon an individual as a member of society and effect a transformation on society as well. In the act of changing the identity of the initiand, society reaffirms itself. While the initiand is transformed, society is reinforced. Paradoxically, the rite which changes an individual becomes a real rite of renewal for the society that performs it.

Moreover, in shaping a person within a social status, the social cadres are re-created. This will be clearly seen in both the circumcision of the man and in the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan of the woman. These celebrate not only the biological imperative to procreate but more importantly the world of spiritual and cultural values that regulate the relationships between men and women, between them and society. There is more to being a human society than simply multiplying!

The great rites of the morning are always accompanied by a great feast. In the case of the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan, this is

limited to the joyful partaking of the rice after the rite. But with the Pag-timbang and the circumcision, the celebrations culminate in the evening when the entire village assembles and, by the light of lanterns and the moon, celebrates the event of the day with music, song, and dance.

PAG-TIMBANG

The ritual of the Pag-timbang is common among the Sama groups and can be found among some Tausugs, often with local characterizations that reveal slightly different meanings. Samas and particularly Tausugs are more acculturated in Islam than the Badjaos. The Badjao Pag-timbang is undoubtedly the most original form of this rite.

Preparation

Pag-timbang means balancing or weighing. The entire rite moves around a device that resembles a weighing scale—a solid wooden pole, three to four inches in diameter and seven to eight feet long, suspended on a rope tied at its center. It hangs like the arm of a large scale, six to seven feet from the ground.

The rope holding it suspended at the center serves as pivot. It drops down four or five feet from above, where it is securely tied to a bar, a beam, or any support that allows free movement of the pole under its arch.

An easy solution would seem to be to celebrate the Pag-timbang at home, hanging the pole from the central joist in the roof of the hut. However, this is very rare. "The Pag-timbang has to be celebrated outside, in the open." Here, the beam that carries the pole can be suspended between trees, between huts, or between beached boats.

Setting up this structure takes time. It is constructed in the afternoon preceding the day of the rite. At the same time, the material and liturgical decorations are gathered and prepared. These will be placed on the structure of the Pag-timbang at the last moment, a few minutes before the celebration.

On the day of the rite, the preparations begin very early, when it is still pitch-dark. The pole is completely wrapped with white cloth, "the color of Tuhan." Finally it is covered with batik materials. At times only these are put on the pole without the white cloth. According to the experts, this is a mistake. The batik materials have simply an ornamental function. They cannot substitute for the white cloth, which alone has liturgical value.

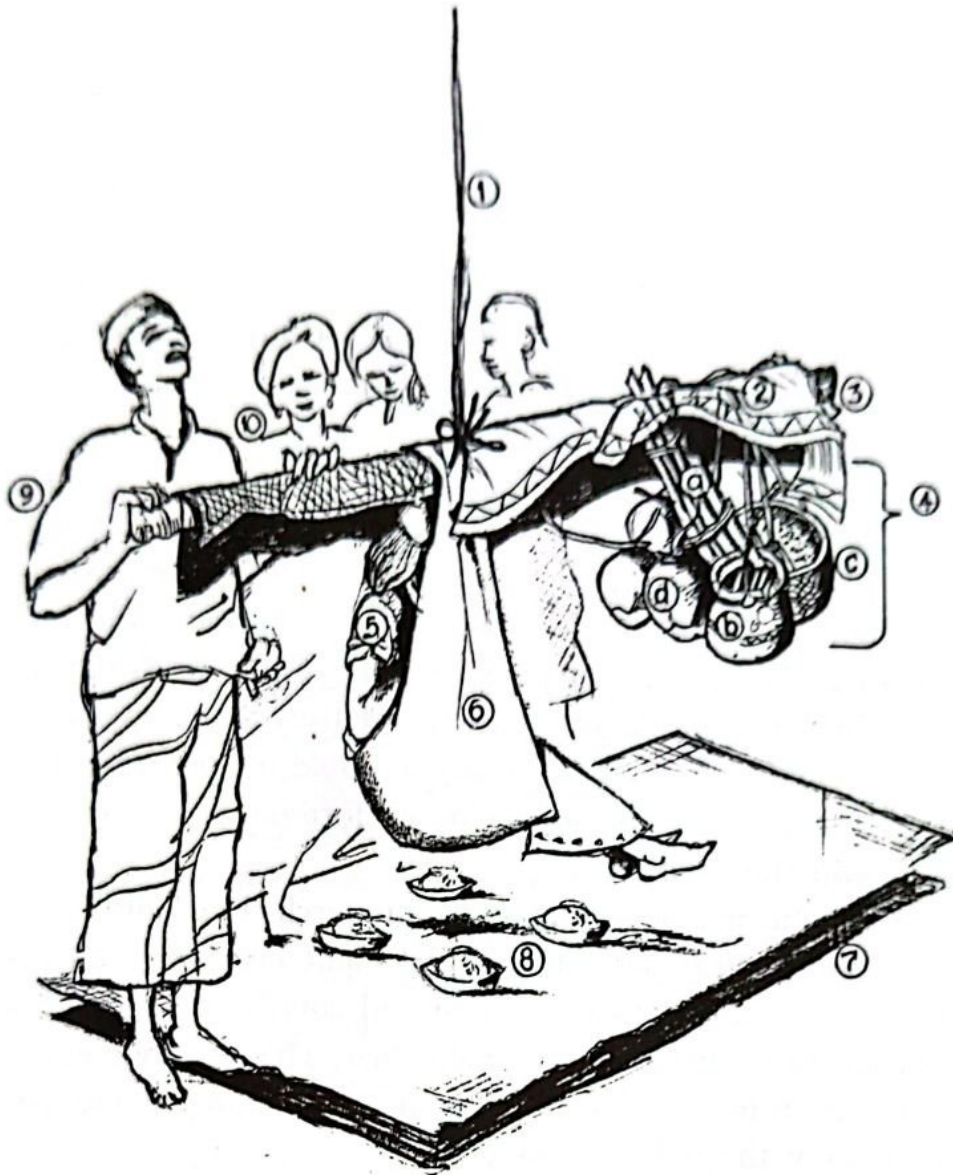
At the center of the pole, another cloth or a *hös* is tied to form a sling three feet above the ground. According to some, this sling should also be white. It must be sturdy, because it will hold the person for whom the Pag-timbang is celebrated, whom we will refer to as "the person in danger." There can in fact be several people, as in the case of the woman who, having had a difficult delivery, was seated in the sling with her child. In one case, a child who almost drowned was seated with the person who saved him. Also for practical reasons, whenever the person in danger is a child, an adult also climbs into the sling.

A *tepoh* is laid on the ground, under the pole and sling. It defines a sacred space. Rice cakes are placed as offerings to the spirits on the center of the *tepoh*, directly under the sling. These may have different forms and colors, and each may be covered with an egg pancake. Within reach, there is a bowl of incense for the prayer.

With the arrival of dawn, the sound of music calls the people to the rite. As customary, the liturgical action opens with the sacred bath. While the person in danger wipes up and changes into better clothes, the imam and his assistants check the area to make sure everything is in order. They talk, and sometimes smoke a cigarette.

The liturgical activity resumes, this time around the pole. The person in danger is seated in the sling. Some assist the person in danger, while others hold the pole to keep it steady in a horizontal position. The person in danger must sit completely suspended with feet off the ground. Actually, this is not difficult to accomplish, but it always takes place amid a lot of confusion.

Next comes the difficult operation of loading one end of the pole with articles which for brevity we will describe as



Pag-timbang. Rope holding entire apparatus and serving as pivot (1); ornamental batiks (2); Pag-timbang pole wrapped in white cloth (3); symbolic material (4); bundle of wood (a), jar of water (b), basket of rice (c), coconuts (d); person in danger, off the ground (5); sling hanging from the center (6); tepoh describing the sacred area (7); rice cake offerings (8); main celebrant, imam (9); people following the imam in his circular processions (10).

"symbolic material." This consists of a bundle of wood, a jar of water, some coconuts, and a basket of rice. Their bulk and their weight make them difficult to balance. While some load the symbolic material, others must balance the pole at the opposite end.

The end opposite the symbolic material can be called the celebrant's end. When everything is finally loaded, the imam alone remains holding this end. He will move it during the rite according to liturgical rules. The helpers withdraw among the people, often in the direction of the west, leaving the east free so that the structure and liturgical action of the *Pag-timbang* are placed in cosmic alignment with the rising sun.

The Rite

The imam begins singing an Arabic canticle and slowly moves the pole so that the person in danger rotates, with the symbolic material on one end and the imam on the other turning around the person in danger. Those present throw handfuls of rice. At times some relatives of the person in danger line up behind the imam and hold the person in front by a corner of the person's clothes, forming a train that circles with the rotation.

First, the imam goes around counterclockwise three, five, or seven times, depending on local traditions. Then, still singing, the imam reverses direction and completes a second set of clockwise rounds equal to the first. The rotations can be easily measured in the winding and unwinding of the rope that keeps the pole suspended.

The circling of the *Pag-timbang* concludes with more intense throwing of rice. Religious tension breaks up into general joy. With the help of those present the symbolic material is unloaded. The person, now out of danger and renewed, is helped down from the sling and welcomed with kisses, embraces, and expressions of congratulations.

After this temporary confusion, the liturgical tempo is briefly recomposed on the *tepoh*, under the pole, by now left to dangle, free and lightened. The imam together with the assistants and the renewed person, gather and sit in a circle around the offerings: the rice cakes beside which other gifts were placed during the interval. A prayer is made with the bowl of incense. The offerings are presented to Tuhan and Umboh. After the prayer, with a very thoughtful and concerned face, the imam starts apportioning the offerings: a part

to the helpers, a part to the relatives of the person helped and the rest for himself. It is payment for his services and the recognition needed to recover his lost power.

The Meaning of the Rite

When questioned on the meaning of the rite, the Badjaos usually give the more readily accessible reasons for which it is celebrated. The Pag-timbang is performed to "fulfill a promise" made at the time of an accident or sickness. Were this promise not kept, the person in danger would be struck again.

In actuality, it seems that the Pag-timbang is used mostly in the case of sickness. In theory, it is used for any kind of sickness; but in practice, it is not employed for ordinary sicknesses which can be treated with traditional medicine or rites in which one apologizes to the spirits.

The Pag-timbang is used only in the case of extraordinary sickness, or more precisely when one is dealing with forms of "malaise" that put one in "danger of life." These forms of "malaise" can range from a difficult childbirth to getting lost on the open sea. They can also be dangerous "accidents," like falling from a tree, meeting rough seas that threaten to sink the boat, or near drownings. In these life-threatening emergencies, one promises to celebrate a Pag-timbang.

Against the background of this broad concept of sickness, one can understand the meaning of this ritual and find the clue to unraveling its meaning. As such, the Pag-timbang is a great rite of renewal, often used as a healing ritual. Among several other primitive societies, the more important healing rituals are developed on the theme of re-creation. This is also the case with the Pag-timbang. The sick body is not cured. Ritually, it is not even taken into consideration, but left on its own and forgotten. This abandonment is equivalent in part to its death. The old person with all of that person's moral shortcomings and sicknesses dies. Instead, the rite concentrates wholly on the re-creation of a new person.

The Pag-timbang takes place "outside the house, in the open," early in the morning, so that the person in danger is immediately positioned in the heart of a cosmic scenario. The

theme of re-creation is further developed in the liturgical actions around the pole. The person in danger sits in the sling at the center of the pole. Even if the person in danger must be shifted for balance, he or she must remain as close to the center as possible. The liturgical devices, like the cloths on the pole and the tepoh with the offerings underneath, all point to the center as a sacred place.

But it is above all the liturgical action that defines the sacredness of that space. The pole is rotated at its center while the imam, and at times some devotees, circle around. These rotations, repeated for a specific number of times, are nothing less than a process of orientation. Similar to the *pag-umboh*, the orientation is made with the help of human bodies. In this case, they delimit and create a sacred center.

Hanging from the pole on the side opposite the imam, the symbolic material also turns. These objects are chosen for their meanings—the rice and coconuts recall and represent Umboh, while the bundle of wood and the jug of water represent fire and water. In these two, fire and water, one could see the primary elements, without which life would not be possible. The Badjaos describe them as “the gift of Tuhan for all.” In these two elements one could also see the two basic realities from which the world is made. Together, the four elements sum up the whole Badjao world, with Umboh representing a vertical dimension or a social dimension, while the fire and water could evoke a horizontal dimension or the material world. During the Pag-timbang, therefore, the entire universe moves with the liturgical persons. Everything moves in circular motion around the point in space that becomes the center of the universe, ultimately defining itself as the sacred center.

In the course of the rite, therefore, the person in danger, seated in the sling with feet off the ground, is suspended between heaven and earth at the center of the universe where the sacred axis passes. Ideally, it passes through the cord that sustains the center of the pole and the sling, breaks through the cosmic levels, and puts the person in danger directly in touch with the sacred absolute, the uranic sacredness.

Within this context, the white of the cloths wrapping the pole and forming the sling which seats the person in danger

takes on further significance. "It is the color of Tuhan," say the Badjaos. Under his protection, surrounded and in direct contact with the splendor of Tuhan, the person in danger finds his or her re-creation.

The Role of the Promise

The Pag-timbang develops in two moments: first the promise and then the celebration of the rite proper. The Badjaos describe the rite as "the fulfillment of a promise." The promise is made as a temporary substitute for the rite, in anticipation of its efficacy.

This is a very practical solution that is used even with other rites: from the simplest, like the presentation of an offering on a grave or by the seat of a *saitan*, to the most complex, like the pag-umboh. In emergency situations, it is physically impossible to celebrate a rite. According to the gravity of the situation, one can only promise—an offering, or a pag-umboh.

In emergencies, one can only promise to celebrate a Pag-timbang. On the other hand, in a difficult childbirth for example, it is possible to celebrate the pag-umboh on the spot. It is simple to do, and does not need the direct involvement of the woman in labor. To immediately celebrate the Pag-timbang is impossible. It can only be postponed until it can be arranged, afforded, and most of all actively participated in by the parturient.

But when a rite is customarily postponed, thus detaching it from the situation of danger that necessitates it, its meaning can easily be transformed. This is the case with the Pag-timbang. Thus the rite itself has come to be reinterpreted.

Degradation of the Meaning

According to some Badjaos, the purpose of the Pag-timbang is to strengthen a person weakened by sickness, similar to the initiation bath. As noted before, serious illness requires that the sick person undergo a ritual bath, to be rehabilitated and restored before reentering society. Only the rite can remove the spiritual cause of the sickness. When used in

this way, the Pag-timbang appears as a medicine of last resort, with which a person is definitely freed from life-threatening danger.

According to others, the Pag-timbang is nothing but a thanksgiving rite to Tuhan for a favor received. This is the destiny that falls on postponed rites. Even the pag-umboh when postponed is sometimes presented as a rite of thanksgiving. Further, the Pag-timbang could be taken as a rite of thanksgiving for a "pardon" received from Tuhan when the sickness is interpreted as the punishment. To reinforce this idea, there is an interesting explanation about why the cloth used in the Pag-timbang should be white. "This color is used because we think that, like the clothes of Tuhan, white is also our heart."

As a rite done to fulfill a promise, a change in its meaning from thanksgiving to spiritual payment is a short step. The reason for slipping into an interpretation of this sort can be found in the main instrument of the rite, the pole. Its primary function is to create a sacred center, but it can easily be seen as the arm of a weighing scale. This way of looking at the pole is very close to popular religious sensibility and very widespread among the Badjaos. One finds it sanctioned in the name of the rite itself: *pag-timbang*, "weighing."

From this meaning, a series of interpretations can be derived, some of which are rather materialistic. The rite can even be reduced to a sort of economic exchange with the purpose of repaying the divinity with an offering proportionate to the favor received. Water, fire, coconut, but above all, rice lose their symbolic significance and become offerings, or rather goods of exchange which buy back the life of the person in danger. Life, however, is always a gift from Tuhan.

Degradation of the Rite

As long as some spiritual dimension is retained, the corruptions remain light, such as the interpretation of the Pag-timbang as a thanksgiving rite. In this case, a rather frequent modification is found in the final phases of the rite, immediately after the series of rotating movements that create the sacred center. The imam pushes his side of the pole down

several times towards the center, making the symbolic material on the other side go higher. It appears as an offertory raised toward the sky and presented to Tuhan.

With the more materialistic interpretations, the structure of the rite is subjected to manipulations and increasingly radical changes. Before the swinging of the offerings described above, the imam moves the sling from the center of the pole towards his end, ritually putting the person in danger in balance with the symbolic material at the other end. This is the first allusion to the idea of weighing. The person in danger is balanced against the symbolic material which begins losing its meaning as an offering and becomes more like a "substitution."

At times the symbolic material is replaced by the real thing. In place of the basket of rice, a sack of rice is loaded on the pole. That sack of rice is used for the feast which always follows these celebrations. Because the sack is so heavy, it becomes difficult to maintain balance unless the sling with the person in danger is moved toward the side of the imam. Obviously, this shift is the last resort, because as much as possible the person in danger "has to be found always at the center."

Often, this is accompanied by a series of symbolic actions, aimed at further emphasizing the concept of weight. Occasionally, after the offerings on the pole are loaded, the imam very theatrically acts out scenes of checking that the offering on one end and the person in danger on the other are the same weight. If the imam is too fussy, the people intervene and shout that the weight is all right.

Viewing this sort of a scene, the observer could erroneously think that the Pag-timbang is nothing but a rite of redemption. Balancing equal weights on a scale suggests the fulfillment of a promise as a means to repay the divinity for a spared life. This makes the rite appear as the fulfillment of a Shylock-like contract, paying a pound of rice for a pound of live flesh.

Such an interpretation of the Pag-timbang is too simplistic and shallow to represent the ultimate explanation of a rite that, among the Badjaos, is preserved as one of the most sacred traditions, learned from their fathers "since ancient

times.* All three interpretations listed above are expressions of the process of degeneration. They ignore an element of primary importance—the initiatory context of the rite, the morning. This is the reason that the Pag-timbang is found numbered among the major Badjao rites.

CIRCUMCISION, OR PAG-ISLAM

Among the Badjaos, circumcision is done at the time of puberty and only for men, unlike other local ethnic groups who also circumcise women. Male circumcision is common and indigenous, as well as an Islamic tradition.

The Badjaos seem well informed of this. While they note the differences, they cannot help observing how similar their rite is to those of the neighboring population, whom the Badjaos consider superior. This contributes to the deepening of their esteem for their own rite and perhaps even to its name, *pag-islam*.

It does not seem that one can derive much more from the use of the term *pag-islam*. One cannot deduce that Badjao circumcision is a rite of passage and entrance into the Islamic community. It is a rite of passage into the Badjao community whose origins and identity are found in its ancestors. The ancestors have shown with their behavior, since time immemorial, the importance and necessity of circumcision.

It is also difficult to hypothesize that the Badjao rite derives from the Islamic tradition. The rite of Badjao circumcision shows original characteristics of its own, typical of archaic religiosity which appreciates a cosmic symbology. The initiatory setting comprising particular times and situations is irrelevant to Islamic circumcision. The Badjao circumcision is a great rite of the morning.

The Rite

The Pag-islam opens with a ritual bath on the gangway in front of the imam's hut in which the circumcision will take place. In contrast to the other great rites which take place in

the hut of the initiand or his relatives, this must occur in the hut of the imam. This perhaps emphasizes that the place of this rite is not within the family circle but in society, the established order.

A short interval follows the bath. The initiand goes home to dry himself and change. To make the act of circumcision easier, he wears a wide *hös*, tight at the waist, that reaches the feet. Under the *hös*, the initiand remains naked. There are no other ritual requirements.

The event is an occasion for displaying one's best clothes and the gifts of sympathy and greetings which are never lacking for a circumcision, such as objects of gold like watches, necklaces, and bracelets, or money strung and pinned everywhere. These ornaments are at times in bad taste, like the wooden crown filled with bank notes which an initiand wore upon entering the rite. These items are additional and are not, strictly speaking, part of the rite. They express the affection of relatives and friends and, with the feast that accompanies the rite, make the event even more solemn.

In his best clothes, the initiand goes to the imam. Inside the hut, he sits cross-legged on a *teph*. A male relative or friend who will assist stands beside him. This calls to mind the role of the godfathers in other cultures, though these do not seem to exist among the Badjaos. He will stay close to the initiand for the duration of the circumcision, holding him by the shoulders and encouraging him to overcome the pain. A basket of rice is also placed beside the initiand, to be later given to the imam as payment. The people gather and form a circle around the initiand.

The imam arrives last. He places himself in front of the initiand, in the center of the scene, and sits down with his legs crossed. After a short prayer with the incense, he raises the *hös* of the initiand and goes under. Then, he lets the *hös* fall over himself to cover everything while he works unseen and undisturbed.

For the actual operation, a sliver of bamboo shaped as a knife is used. This is a common implement, used to cut, scrape, and make holes. The circumcision can have various

forms. The Badjao do not remove the prepuce. It is usually slit vertically, like the cuff of a shirt, or scratched to make the skin bleed. The Badjaos explain that "all that is needed is some blood." Once cut and bled, the prepuce is rolled back and tightly bound with a small white band.

When the imam emerges from under the hōs, the people know that the circumcision has taken place. The young man "is now a man." His parents kiss and congratulate him. The musicians, who had played throughout the rite, throw themselves on the *agong* and the other musical instruments with greater vigor. The people explode in festivity.

Significance

With the Badjaos, circumcision is not done for hygienic or sanitary purposes. If this were the case, having witnessed what happens, I can say it would not even be advisable. It is essentially a religious practice.

Its purpose is to "make a man," first in the profound sense of realizing a person in the sacred but also in the specific sense of entering the world of masculinity. As if to emphasize this, the role of women in the rite is kept to a minimum. The initiand enters the world of masculinity together with men. The imam fulfills the ritual requirements and the man beside the initiand stands for the community of Badjao men, which both serves as model and accepts the initiand.

Circumcision is a trial that proves a man worthy of facing the difficulties of life. The pain of the incision shows on the face of the initiand. The man beside him and the others understand and encourage him. He must not retreat, faint, or cry. He must show courage. The circumcision symbolizes the ordeal which the initiand must endure to become a man. In mastering it, he proves that he is able to overcome all trials. Once the circumcision is over, the people congratulate him for proving his bravery. He has shown that he is a man.

An Ancient Mystery

The rite of circumcision has an even more profound meaning beyond the concept of ordeal. The Badjaos themselves

have difficulty expressing this, saying only that they continue the practice of circumcision because it was taught to them by their ancestors.

The behavior and playful comments of the people hint at the deeper meaning. They elaborate on the effects of the circumcision, dwelling on the theme of sexuality from a chauvinistic male perspective. This firsthand feedback, though debatable as evidence, primes an understanding of the religious experience that develops around this rite. It describes in particular the religious experience of the initiand—all experiences that presuppose a series of intuitions where Badjao religious thought about circumcision hides.

This line of thought points to the mystery in which the man finds himself before the woman, the need to discover what he is and what he ought to be in relation to her, seeing how he is equal to her and how he is different, and understanding the meaning of this diversity. Against the backdrop of these themes, along with a knowledge of the history of religions, the significance of Badjao circumcision can be found.

Definition of the Diversity

Human diversity expresses itself fundamentally in sexual identity. Sexual awareness can be measured by the need for privacy, a commodity valued among the Badjaos but not easily found. Children are naturally unembarrassed and go around naked until they are three or four years old, or even later for boys. As they mature, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to find privacy. Bathing is done everywhere, even in front of the hut. The men wear only shorts and the women use the hōs. Only the married women can go topless. The younger ones are allowed this liberty only in the evening or at the night, at home. With the arrival of menstruation and the need for personal hygiene, the adolescent girl learns how to withdraw for privacy, mainly by boat.

Sexual identity and the ethical imperatives that accompany it take shape first on the biological level. With the onset of puberty and the development of the reproductive capacity, the teenage girl decisively enters the adult world. The first

menstruation is the dramatic event that marks the passage of a girl to a woman. The teenage boy has no similar moment. For him, the passage to sexual maturity must be made visible with a rite.

This is the primary purpose of the rite of circumcision. It makes the man by recognizing his physical maturity and establishes him in the status of male sexuality. In Badjao imagery, the decisive moment is the suffering of the incision. This is the suffering of death. The sexual indifference of childhood is ended and, with it, the bodily freedom acceptable among children. But it is also the suffering of rebirth. With the same incision, the source is opened and those sexual potentials that make a boy into "a man" are set free.

Badjao comments on circumcision also deal with blood, the "bit of blood" that determines the efficacy of the rite. Does it represent the blood of infantile dependency, that binds the young boy to his mother? If so, circumcision would appear as a bleeding that drains the initiate of the blood of the previous being, the child that had indulged in the pleasures of a carefree life under the protection of the family. Or does it represent the blood in which life is formed? In this case, circumcision would open the source and tap the first plasma of life. Is it perceived as a rite that mimics the flow of the first menstrual blood? Also because of this, perhaps, there is no need for a female circumcision to "make" a woman. Her passage is natural, done alone.

Reestablishing the Unity

The sexual organs describe a symbolic physiology. In modern terms, one could say this represents the polarization of the sexes. Not concerned with psychology, the Badjao observes only the physiological differences as comprising the element that uniquely distinguishes a man from a woman. The sexual organ becomes a symbol of the division of the human race into two distinct and opposite worlds. This division is the product of a breakdown of the androgynous being, the first primordial being in whom all the potentials, male and female, are united. This being is Umboh.

From this perspective, the act of circumcision, with the incision in the male sexual organ, strikes down the bipolar view of sexuality. The separation of the sexes is symbolically removed and the human race is once again summed up in the androgyny of Umboh. The circumcised young man is plunged into the original potential from which he will emerge with the ability to overcome the separation.

The circumcised man is a man enabled for union. More precisely, he is a man capable of union in a specific sector of social life, the family. As a couple, when the spouses become one flesh, the separation of the sexes is only momentarily interrupted. But the arrival of a child obliges them to find their identity not in differentiation from the other but in unity toward the child. With the child, the separation is definitely overcome.

The Badjaos explain that "an uncircumcised man cannot get married," because he is not yet a man. To become a man, here, suggests complementarity. The circumcision makes the man capable of re-creating the union.

Renewal of the Community

In re-creating its men, the community re-creates itself: numerically—in the children that the initiated will bring into the world; morally—in the family that will unite two segments of society and deepen the solidarities within the community; most of all, spiritually—refurbishing its system of beliefs and values with particular reference to the status and role of man in the family and in the community.

This system of beliefs and ideal values is clearly structured, as it appears sanctioned in the traditional Badjao institutions that also govern the rite, defining some of its variables. In one and the same liturgical celebration several young men can be circumcised. They can be members of one and the same family. But with a proviso: the eldest and the youngest cannot be together. Brothers, yes, but of different statuses. The community re-creates its men and gets re-created, bringing into the rite its concrete identity. The identity on which daily life hinges—without confusion.

PAG-HINAN NI TUHAN

The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan is celebrated for the woman on her first pregnancy. According to a simple popular explanation, its purpose is to invoke the protection of Tuhan.

The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan is clearly not the female counterpart to circumcision, required of every male adolescent to become "a man." The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan concerns only the woman who gets pregnant and matters only for those who procreate.

Pag-hinan ni Tuhan may be translated as "the work of Tuhan," or "the creation of Tuhan." It might imply that the fetus should be the primary point of reference for the rite, with the purpose of invoking Tuhan's protection of this new life. The mother, obviously, would not be excluded. As the second point of reference, she could not but benefit from the same blessing.

If this were the priority of the rite, it should be celebrated each time a woman gets pregnant. With rare exceptions, the rite is celebrated only once for the same woman—precisely, when she becomes pregnant for the first time. The rite, therefore, does not have the fetus as the point of reference, but rather the woman who is the matrix of that fetus and of many others that may follow.

If a woman loses her first child or experiences a complicated birth, popular religiosity sometimes traces these difficulties to the way in which the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan was done. It suggests an improperly done rite. Very pragmatically, the rite is then repeated. This is the rare exception that proves the rule that the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan should be celebrated only once in the woman's life.

These cases aside, there is one other situation that requires the rite to be redone. It is celebrated for a divorced woman or widow, who later remarries and gets pregnant for the "first" time. This custom allows a better understanding of the role and the objective of the rite. The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan does not celebrate wild creativity. Female creativity outside the family is unthinkable. Female creativity is perceived as a service to society, realizable in the family context. The husband, in

a secondary position, is always found beside the woman in the rite.

Preparations

When possible, the celebration is done in the hut of the panday. Aside from this, the panday does not have a role in the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan. She does not preside over it, nor appear among the principal actors. She participates in the rite only by her presence.

The choice of the place, however, remains very significant. It identifies the panday who will henceforth have the task of assisting the woman throughout her pregnancy and delivery—with her advice, her nursing expertise, her prayers, and above all with her power. The child will also carry in itself the mark of this aid: the spirit of the panday.

In her hut, in the very first hours of the day while the village is still asleep, some women cook what is needed for the rite. In the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan, rice has a greater role than in any other great rite. Enough is cooked to fill up a huge basin until it spills over. Shaped with the hands and molded in the form of a cone, it rises to a height of a foot and a half. On the sides of this mound, cooked and peeled bananas and cassava are placed. The whole makes one think of a real Badjao cornucopia.

The various foods that make up the arrangement are determined by family tradition. The combination of bananas and cassava is from one tradition. Another tradition adds sweet potatoes. All this care indirectly reveals the importance of the basin of rice in the rite.

Meanwhile, someone else takes care of the other preparations in the hut. A *tephoh* is spread in the middle on the floor. It serves to define the sacred space. A vessel of water is then placed on the *tephoh*. Its careful decorations indicate a clear intent to emphasize its symbolic significance. The mound of rice is placed beside the vessel of water. Water and rice, the two elements necessary for all rites, assume a special importance in the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan.

The Rite

Outside on the gangway, the musical instruments play uninterrupted. The people assemble. Preparations are made for the opening ritual bath. Between the huts, those doing the preparations find a space that opens toward the horizon with a clear sight of the point of the sunrise. Here, a mortar is set in place. In the Badjao liturgies, the mortar is used only in rites concerning women.

The pregnant woman is seated astride the mortar. She stands out high above her husband who squats beside her. They look toward the east. The imam stands behind them and presides. From the woman's loose hair, he picks out a strand from the crown, holds it in his left hand, and blows over it as he prays. Holding the lock and praying, he then pours the ritual number of bowls of water on her head. In a simpler manner, the bath of the husband follows. When it is over, there is as usual a short interval while the couple dry themselves and change.

Then everyone gathers in the hut of the panday for the celebration of the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan proper. The pregnant woman is seated cross-legged on the tepoh facing the east. The vessel of water is in front of her, almost between her knees. Behind the water is the basin of rice. They are aligned and form a whole. The husband is seated beside the woman to the right. Together they occupy one side of the tepoh. On the tepoh, perpendicular to the couple, the imams sit beside each other, looking towards the center and the alignment: woman, water, rice.

Upon the invitation of the leading imam, the woman leans forward and puts her hands on the vessel of water so that her fingers are immersed and her palms are resting on the rim. The husband does the same from the side. They will remain in that position during the whole rite. It is through the physical contact with the water that the pregnant woman is in contact with the sacred and manifests her solidarity with it.

The leading imam initiates the prayer. The other imams respond. The prayer is alternately sung and recited in the



Pag-hinan ni Tuhan. Mound of cooked rice with bananas and cassava (1); vessel of water (2); woman pregnant for the first time (3); her husband (4); tepoh defining the sacred area (5); bowl with burning charcoal (6); imams leading the ritual (7).

usual mixture of Arabic and Sinama. After the incense is blessed, the prayer continues as the incense is passed over the rice, over the water, and in the direction of the woman. In this way, the water and rice are presented to Tuhan and Umboh as they are asked for their help in keeping the woman fertile. The liturgical action concludes with a brief aspersion. The leading imam plunges his hand into the water and sprinkles first the woman and then her husband.

Before the liturgical assembly breaks up, the water and rice used in the rite are consumed. First, the water is sipped directly from the basin by the woman and then by her husband, the imams, relatives, and friends. Little by little, as each takes a sip, the people stand and begin to move around. The scene becomes more and more informal.

In that relaxed atmosphere, the women enter once again. They take the basin of rice from the tepoh and begin to divide it among those present. Cigarettes and coffee are passed around. Some take their plate of rice and go to eat it with their families at home. Outside, the music continues, creating a festive atmosphere.

The Significance of the Rite

The name of the rite is emblematic. It does not suggest the idea of a liturgical action that in itself creates but rather a liturgical action that celebrates an event that has already taken place. The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan is mainly an epiphany, announcing that a woman is pregnant for the first time. The importance of this event stands most of all on the fact that it is the first time. It recognizes that the woman has the capacity to procreate—something that was only presupposed before. Afterwards, were she to get pregnant again, it would no longer be news because one already knows she can procreate.

To procreate is an extraordinary capability, a privilege not possessed by all women. It is an extraordinary endowment not merely as a human realization that comes naturally with physical maturity. The Badjao religious man cannot help but perceive supernatural intervention. It is truly a gift, a work of Tuhan, precisely as the name of the rite asserts.

It is the capacity to procreate, therefore, that is the work of Tuhan. The fetus reveals it. The rite recognizes and announces it.

It is a rite of initiation. Though, mainly for two reasons, its initiatory character does not appear very clearly. First, the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan appears as a limited and secondary re-creation, in contrast to the circumcision which is a more radical re-creation that "makes" a man. In the Pag-hinan ni

Tuhan, the woman-procreator is found, not made. This is a work of Tuhan. The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan recognizes the social transition from simple female to one established in the status and role of the woman-procreator.

The nature of this transition is the second reason that keeps the initiatory character of the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan in the background. The passage does not appear explicitly in the ritual sequence. In contrast, the circumcision formalizes the transition in ritual; there is in fact an ordeal, a scarification, and blood. This liturgical progression eventually finds a parallel and an intensification in its cosmic context. In the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan, the ritual transition appears only in the context of the opening bath, with its loosening associated with initiatory death, the waters of life suggesting a re-creation, and the cosmic scenario of the passage from night to day.

The liturgical action is also not well developed. The rite seems content with focusing the attention of the participants on a series of images that translate and reveal the mystery of a woman's procreative capacity. These images are developed through symbolic symmetries.

The first symmetry is that of *woman-cosmos*. The genetrix-woman is elevated to a principle that orders and allows an interpretation of the cosmic event. The image of her womb, that holds the embryo and gives forth a new creature, lends form to the night's darkness and the primordial waters that hold the sun every night and bring it forth every morning. On the other hand, the cosmic event gives a sacred backlight to the human event fulfilled in the woman. The rising of a new day, against the backdrop of the first day of creation, becomes the model for the genetrix-woman. From the bosom of the dawn what is generated and revealed is not only a renewed creature as in the Pag-timbang, and is not simply a new man as in circumcision. It is a "genetrix of life," a being which expresses the sacred cosmic creativity itself and continues its work in the world.

A second set of images is developed on the symmetry of *water-woman*. This is explicitly represented in the basin of water on the tepoh, at the center of the rite. The woman seeks

solidarity with the water. In no other Badjao rite does water receive such an intense symbolic appreciation. First, the water of the basin relates to the water of the uterus of the pregnant woman, holding a new creature whose life is being formed. Then, in the context of the morning, both waters reveal their derivation from the primordial waters of creation. Water offers itself as the primary element from which life, every life, proceeds. It is the symbol of universal fecundity.

In this universal fecundity, the woman seeks a full and free participation. In the rite, she immerses her fingers in the water of the vessel. While this water describes the mystery of female fecundity, it also describes the wonder that Tuhan has brought about in the woman, pregnant for the first time.

The basin of rice, full to the brim, is a symbol of abundance that adds to the image of fecundity. It speaks of the abundance that the pregnant woman brings to her *kampung* and the Badjao community. The mortar that seats the pregnant woman during the opening bath is another small device that develops the theme of femininity and fertility.

It is primarily in these symmetries that the rite has to be understood. In them the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan proclaims the sanctity of life, the mystery of pregnancy and universal fecundity. On this background, it emerges as a solemn, ceremonial presentation before the community of the wondrous work of Tuhan: the woman with the capacity to procreate. Indirectly, it represents an initiation. The woman pregnant for the first time is officially recognized in her new mode of being and new social role as procreator. The Pag-hinan ni Tuhan, more than a sacred action, is a sacred representation.

The Social Events

JUST WANDERING AROUND A BADJAO VILLAGE, one will not fail to meet persons with white marks, chalklike tattoos, on their bodies. The substance commonly used is rice powder mixed with tobacco. It is applied with a finger, on the forehead, on the dimple of the neck, around the ankles and wrists.

These marks have a protective purpose. They are a defense against specific dangers. It could be the spirit of a recently deceased person, perhaps particularly restless due to an untimely or violent death. It could be an everpresent danger, like "the green" of the forest, the power that is represented, stored, and radiated by the trees under which one has to pass.

These are not dangers that threaten normal persons, but rather those in particular situations, such as the relatives of the dead person whose spirit is restless. Generally, sick or convalescent persons need this protection. Sickness is perceived as a weakening, a wearing down, a "loss of power." The sick person is a person "without energies." The convalescent person is still a "weak" person. These defenseless persons are in a state of extreme vulnerability.

The tattoo is painted on particular points of the body called the "doors." There are a number of them, and the Badjao admits to not knowing them all. The most common are the orifices, followed by the various joints of the body. The ankle and particularly the wrist are the most evident. The wrist is the main door, leading directly into the very seat of power, the arm.

THE ARM

As the upper limb of the human body, the arm is the place where the individual gathers his or her strength, and the instrument through which he or she expresses it. It is the symbolic seat in which all the forces and energies of the human person reside, the true symbol of one's power. Generally, the same symbolic connotations can be found in both arms, though occasionally the left arm evokes feminine references and becomes the arm of the woman, while the right arm reveals masculinity. When this distinction is not made, the right arm stands as the seat and the symbol of personal power.

From a study of the arm, one can tell the intensity of a person's power, and consequently his or her state of health. Through the arm, a person loses energy, and through the arm that person gets it back. Using the arm, the religious practitioner pours sacred power into persons and situations.

Liturgical activities also recognize this sector of power. The main defenses against attacks from humans or spirits are arrayed on the arm. Aside from tattooing, perhaps the most diffused practice is that of binding. A cord is ritually tied around the wrist. The knot, tightened, symbolically binds and imprisons power.

The most complex liturgical activities are found in the rites for birth, marriage, and death. These liturgies focus on the whole arm, but always with particular attention to the joints, especially the wrist. Prayers, with or without incense, are focused on the arm. Often, the imam blows on the arm. There are presentations where rice is handed over. These activities evoke the religious meanings that are found in the morning ritual baths. According to the circumstances, these liturgies on the arm can assume functions of renewal after power has been expended. They can also function as initiation in the preparation for a major rite.

BIRTH

Life in any form is a miracle, but the life of the human being commands particular respect, especially in the phase from conception to birth when it is mysteriously formed in

the secrecy of the maternal womb. This cannot but be a miracle, and the capacity to procreate must be a gift, the work of Tuhan. This conviction is dramatically celebrated in the rite of the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan where the woman's subordinate but important role as co-worker is acknowledged. This rite begins the long sequence of liturgical actions that accompany the first and all succeeding pregnancies.

For these liturgical actions, the *panday* is the expert. Each *kampong* has its own *panday*, held in great respect. Between the *kampong* and the *panday* there is a relationship of complete trust. One calls on the *panday* of a different *kampong* only in extreme cases when one cannot do otherwise.

The *panday* officially enters the life of a woman when she gets pregnant for the first time. The *panday* is always present during the rite of the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan. Thus, the *panday* enters the life of the woman not only professionally, but even ritually.

She will accompany the woman during the entire period of pregnancy, helping her take care of the creature she bears in her womb and assisting in the birth, which initiates and establishes the woman in perhaps her most important role. A special relationship develops between the *panday* and the pregnant woman, like that between mother and daughter. For that woman, the *panday* will become *umboh*.

She will remain in the woman's life even after the first childbirth, which can be followed by many more. Even if the woman moves to another village, the relation with her *panday* remains. If she gives birth again, it is not unusual for her to call from afar for her trusted *panday*.

Badjao women prefer to give birth at home. They turn to the hospital only when a difficult delivery is likely. In this case, those who live far from a hospital take their boat and go to live near a Badjao village close to a hospital. Here, they will live with relatives, or simply remain in their boat. The delivery will take place in these temporary residences. The hospital will be approached only in case of emergency.

They dislike going to the hospital for several reasons. First, it is costly. Second, the delivery is in the hands of medical

and paramedical personnel, not the panday. Often, however, the panday is not kept away from the delivery room. She is almost always admitted and allowed to do her prayers. Still, the one giving birth, who lives her experience above all as a religious fact, cannot help but find it inadequate that the panday is confined to a corner, at times barely tolerated.

Most worrisome to some Badjaos is that in the hospital, the woman giving birth would find herself away from her world and from those spirits that alone can really protect and help her. They fear that the ancestors and Umboh could be offended by the lack of confidence shown in them. When the *pag-umboh* is celebrated at home to help in the delivery, Umboh becomes present. Going away from him at the last moment can be dangerous.

For the delivery, the woman may be moved to a former home, even the family's boat. The explanation given to outsiders for this is often the search for privacy and tranquillity. In truth, the reason is primarily religious. These choices are real steps backwards. By returning to her former place of residence, the woman moves closer to the traditional ways of living. She plunges herself into tradition and draws near to the ancestors and Umboh, who love tradition.

The Delivery

There are no beds, tables, or benches in either the Badjao hut or boat. The woman gives birth on the floor with her back on a *tepoh* and her head raised on some rolled clothes serving as a pillow. The panday sits in front of her, between the legs. Another person sits back to back behind the panday, providing a backrest and support for the panday. At the moment of delivery, the panday rests her feet on the thighs of the woman giving birth, so that she has the leverage to pull the baby out with her hands.

The whole process is ritualized. The *pag-umboh* serves as background. It can be started as soon as the woman has her first labor pains and is over only after the delivery when mother and child are out of danger. Aside from the *pag-umboh*, there are other simple liturgical actions which spe-

cifically follow natural events. The more complex liturgies take place after the delivery when practical concerns are less compelling. Before and during the delivery, religious urgency is expressed mainly in a sequence of prayers.

There is ready recourse to invocations and spontaneous prayers. Informal personal pleas are addressed to Tuhan, as well as to Umboh or to the ancestors. More important are the formal prayers learned by the panday during her apprenticeship. These are the "true" prayers with a spirit of their own. Apart from their significance, real or attributed, their efficacy is almost magical. They are used during the various stages of labor to obtain the opening of the vagina, the untying of the fetus, and so on.

The most efficacious are the usual Arabic-sounding ejaculatory prayers which are said to sometimes contain Koranic verses. There are also formalized prayers in the Sama language. Even though less powerful, they present an efficacy of their own. The following is one example:

If it is like a fishing line, let it be smoothed,
If it is like rattan, let it be straightened,
If it is like rope, let it be loosened.

The implied reference to a knot is related to the belief that the fetus is hanging, bound tightly to the upper part of the uterus. The prayer is meant to untie it.

In addition to this basic repertoire, there is a series of prayers used in the most desperate situations. If the delivery takes place during the night, suitable prayers are available for warding off bad spirits that may come in from outside or from the sea through the cracks of the hut. If the woman is in labor for a long time, she is given a special preparation of coconut oil to drink. To make it more efficacious, the panday blesses it, reciting a specific prayer and blowing over it.

As soon as the newborn enters the world, the panday holds it close and forcefully blows on its mouth. Whatever the practical value of this action may be, the ultimate significance is religious. That spurt of air holds the breath of life. The panday draws from her reservoir of power and in that breath

communicates life force to the newborn. With the gift of power, the panday becomes umboh also to the child.

Burying the Placenta

As the former link between mother and child, the placenta is part of the human being. It appears in the midst of an extraordinary event, one of the most sacred in human life. It



Birth. Wall of the head or "wall of Umboh" (1); woman in labor (2); panday (3); woman serving as backrest to panday (4).

is a sacred remnant and must be disposed of properly. It is seen as a kind of fetus and described as a twin of the newborn, like a sort of elder brother or sister, born dead. More than just a simple belief of the biological order, this description is a symbolic idiom. The image demands respect and suggests the way with which it must be disposed of. The placenta must be buried like a human being.

Therefore, as in a funeral rite, the placenta is first of all conscientiously washed. It is the specific duty of the panday to do this. In the course of this liturgical action, she recites a prayer, the same prayer that the imam uses when he ritually washes the body of a dead person. The placenta is then wrapped in a white cloth, similar to the funeral custom of wrapping the body of the dead person in white bandages after it is bathed. Finally, a coconut is split in two, the meat is removed, and the small bundle with the placenta is put inside. It becomes a sort of coffin.

The funeral follows. The panday, carrying the small vessel, goes out followed by a few persons and looks for a place where she can bury it. It is not necessary that the burial be done in a cemetery, nor very far away. Usually such burials can be done in a place, a bit out of the way, just outside the village.

When the delivery occurs in the hospital, one asks that the placenta not be thrown away. Placed in a plastic bag, it is taken home for a proper burial. This is the only way it can be disposed of. Even if the ritual appears as a pale image of the funeral rite, it cannot be considered a simple custom. The ritual is modulated on the same obligation as burying the dead.

Prayer on the Arm

The activities related to childbirth conclude with the rite on the arm. This is done primarily for the panday but is extended to all who have helped. As the Badjaos say, it is performed for "all who have touched blood." There is a tendency to perform this rite on both arms, but on the right arm it is only an accompaniment. The prayer begins on the left arm and the most important part of the rite takes place here. It

is described as the prayer of the left arm, of the arm of the panday, or of the arm of the woman.

Cooked yellow rice is used. The panday blesses it by blowing over it and praying the usual Arabic-sounding spells. Then, one by one, she takes three pinches and puts them successively on the wrist, the inner elbow, and the shoulder. She places them on each joint with a blow of air and a prayer. There is a different prayer for each joint. Most are in Arabic but, as usual, prayers in Sama are added. This is one example:

Though it was difficult, she gave birth.
By His [Tuhan's] power, we succeeded
In delivering the baby.

After taking care of herself, the panday turns her attention to those who have helped, repeating the same ceremony on the arm of each.

The liturgical action with the rice now concluded, the binding of the wrists follows. The panday tears a strip of white cloth and rolls it to make a cord. Sometimes, she colors it yellow. After blessing it with a blow of air and a prayer, she ties it on her wrist. She will then do the same for those who have helped. These cords are worn until they wear out. They can be replaced on the occasion of another birth. The rite of the arm will then be repeated and the cord on the wrist replaced with a new one.

It is significant that this rite takes place after the delivery. The rite on the arm has the purpose of giving back power, of "rejoining the bones at the joints." This expression recalls those recovering from a sickness, whose weakness is described as "disconnected joints." In the case of childbirth, the weakening is due to the fact of having helped, of having given out power. Just as the imam should be compensated after expending power in religious rites, the panday should also be compensated after the delivery.

However, unlike the case with other rites, material compensation does not seem to be enough. To restore the panday to her original power, a specific rite is needed. In delivery

there is a radical loss of power because "blood was touched." Everyone who touches blood, even the person who simply washed the cloths smeared with the blood of the delivery, should receive the rite.

The blood of the woman in labor is said to be "dangerous" blood. It is the only blood seen in this way. The blood of menstruation and the blood of wounds do not seem to be considered dangerous. Among the Badjaos, blood as such does not connote danger, as might be true among other peoples. The only dangerous blood seems to be related to the birth of a new creature into the world. Perhaps even more than the placenta, this blood is a sacred remnant.

The rite on the arm does not only have the purpose of restoring. Observing the rite closely, one notices that the left arm is in a way personalized. The rice presented at the joints of the arm, that is, to the doors of the body, recalls the offerings of rice made to the spirits. The power that lives in the panday and that has its residence in her left arm is, therefore, not just energy. It is a living power, a spirit in which the absolute power finds its extension. The cord on the wrist is a symbolic way of harnessing and "binding" to oneself this power.

MARRIAGE

As background to every marriage, long and subtle negotiations are needed to draw up the contract and define the alliances between different family groups. No one is in a hurry to lay down his own cards. In a society that does not measure time, the future spouses can do nothing but wait without compromising themselves and their relatives.

After an agreement is reached, the preparations start. But the date of the wedding, up to the last moment, remains uncertain. It is contingent on both human and especially religious factors. It may be the weather, or someone's well-being. If a member of the wedding party is sick, the wedding must be postponed. "How can one go in procession when someone is sick?"

The reasons can range from the most serious to the most trivial. One time, for religious reasons, a wedding was postponed to the next full moon. While waiting, the people lived off the provisions that were gathered for the feast. When the new date for the wedding approached, they found themselves without rice. To raise the money to buy anew what was needed, a fishing expedition was organized at the last moment. No luck. The wedding was again postponed—this time indefinitely, partly to clarify the misunderstandings that the frustrating postponements had caused.

To do a wedding properly, one must have plenty of time at his disposal. Among the Badjaos, the preparation does not follow a schedule. The planning appears to be an open process where one task is attended to only after the previous one has been done. The succession of events creates the process and guides the people, not vice versa. Should this process be interrupted, one goes back and starts again. The final goal can wait.

A last element of suspense remains in the hands of the groom. It is up to the groom and his party to lead the way and begin the celebrations. When it seems the right moment has come, the groom takes the boat and goes to get his bride, bringing the money for the dowry and the feast. With relatives, friends, and acquaintances, they sail in a procession of boats with banners. At the stern, the musicians bang the *agong* and the other two musical instruments. There must be precisely three, the magic number that contains generative potentials.

Presentation of the Dowry

The wedding evolves in a celebration of movements in time, ideally over a span of three days and three nights. It begins late in the afternoon of the first day when the small flotilla of the groom arrives in the village of the bride. The groom and his followers disembark at the bow. Some carry on their shoulders sacks of rice, cases of drinks, and other food for the feast. They go directly to the house of the bride, where only her relatives are waiting. The bride keeps herself

hidden in some isolated corner because she must remain separated from the groom until the rite of union.

Without delay the first rite is celebrated: the presentation of the dowry. The groom and the relatives sit on multicolored *tepos* in a circle with the relatives of the bride. This rite represents an exchange, and there is no exchange without bargaining. Bargaining is usually conducted by the respective maternal uncles of the two spouses. But all take part in a playful spirit. An amount is presented. It is refused. Sacks of rice are added, with drinks, cigarettes, and so on.

In reality, an agreement has already been reached beforehand and part of the dowry already paid. This negotiation and final exchange is primarily a ritual representation of the contractual aspect of the marriage and the conclusion of an alliance. After this, the feasting begins. It expresses relief and joy that an agreement was reached and an alliance made.

The Nuptials

The alliance is sealed the next day with the nuptials, and a new family is created. The ritual sequence is divided into three moments: morning, midday, and evening. The first two merit particular attention. They constitute the clearly religious part of the wedding, while the rest of the day serves as background.

The ritual bath of the spouses must take place in the morning. This is in fact an initiatory bath. The *agong* begins to play from the first light. Except for the few concerned, everyone remains asleep, tired from the celebrations of the preceding night and anticipating those to come. The bath tends to remain a rather private event, with only the groom, the bride, and their closest relatives in attendance. The imam waits for them at the appointed spot. Any public place such as a gangway or a boat will do. Turned towards the east, they receive the opening bath with the rising of the sun.

After the bath, the groom and the bride return to their respective abodes, where each is supposed to stay in relative seclusion. In reality, the groom is never at home. He goes around with his friends and maybe even goes to visit the hut

of the bride, only to be playfully sent away. The bride, however, does not leave the house. She spends most of her time seated quietly on a tepoh, amid pillows and rolled clothes, while her friends swirl around her, fixing her dress and giving the finishing touches to her hair. Avoiding excessive movement, the bride isolates herself and sets herself apart from what is going on around her. The same attitude will be imposed on both spouses later on, after the rite of union. It effectively segregates them and makes them appear as a couple in a world that is not of this world.

The rite of union takes place "at midday" when the sun is at its zenith, the moment when the source and symbol of cosmic vitality is at the maximum of its splendor and activity. Its presence is a blessing and good omen. Under the same midday sun the pag-umboh also begin; Umboh and the ancestors are thus easily evoked. The new family is born under their eyes and their protection. The event is divided into three liturgical actions: the strengthening of the groom's arm, the procession, and finally the act of union.

At the right time, the imam, often with some colleagues, heads towards the hut of the groom. In expectation of him, the interior has been arranged and decorated. When large expenses are not feasible, a tepoh on the floor is enough. The groom, dressed for the occasion though not necessarily in indigenous clothes, sits on the tepoh. The imam and his helpers position themselves around him. The bowl with burning charcoal is brought in and incense is put in it.

The smoking bowl is placed in front of the groom. The imam takes the groom's right arm and extends it. This is the arm of the man. He carefully positions the arm about a foot above the bowl of incense. He wraps it with multicolored batik cloths. As in the other rites, these have only a decorative purpose. They highlight the value of the arm, the real focus of attention.

The Arabic-sounding prayers begin. The imam leads. The helpers answer and add to what he has said. The imam takes the bowl of incense and moves it around the groom and around the arm. In between one prayer and another, he leans

forward and blows along the arm. He "strengthens" it by communicating his power. At the end, money is deposited on the *repoh*. The imam picks it up, touches the head of the groom with it, and puts it in his own pocket. This is the first small gift that restores the imam to his original power, and that gives recognition to the gift of power passed on to the groom.

There is no corresponding rite for the bride. She plays a passive role. To become wife, "she is taken" by the groom who is the principal actor. In preparation for this moment, he was made into a man through circumcision and has just been strengthened with the prayer on the arm. He must be strong. In the act of establishing a new family, he will come face to face with the mystery of the *atahah kalluman* and its power.

The second liturgical action follows immediately. This is the procession to get the bride. As people and news go to and fro between the hut of the bride and the group of the groom, the groom and his party make their way on the gangplanks. In the midst of this flow of persons, one can recognize a procession led by the imam. He appears to be very absorbed in his task, undisturbed by the happenings around him. He does not walk in his usual way but steps with a cadence. This is not just any movement from one place to another. It is a liturgical movement. "Going in procession" is synonymous to "celebrating a wedding." This is a rite of passage. The groom is about to enter the house of the bride and join the group of the bride. He is about to meet the mystery of femininity and life. A new family is about to be born.

The groom follows the imam, as though inexperienced and needing guidance. This manner of being guided is also seen in the succeeding phases of the celebrations, where the groom and bride are led by the hand by relatives or friends to their proper positions. It is almost as if they were incapable of expressing their own will.

Flooded by a sea of people, the hut of the bride awaits the wedding party. The bride is inside, where she has remained the whole morning in the company of her friends. She sits, but in a particular position. With her back towards the people, she faces the wall from a distance of perhaps one meter. More precisely, she faces the wall of the head. As seen

elsewhere, this wall is found in the most intimate part of the house on the side opposite the wall of the feet where the entrances are found. She will receive the nuptial party with her back turned. This way of placing herself perhaps serves the same function as the veil on the face of the bride among other indigenous groups. It removes the woman from society and from the masculine world, isolating her in the mystery of her virginity. Indirectly it further dramatizes the liturgical act of union.

Plowing his way through the crowd, the imam leads the groom to the back of the bride. Here, with the groom, he squats as best he can. Taking the right hand of the groom, he closes it into a fist, with the index finger extended. He then moves the hand of the groom forward and guides it to touch the bride with the index finger, first on the forehead and then on the chest. This is the formal act of union, the act with which the man takes a wife. The liturgical action of strengthening the arm of the groom finds here its ultimate significance. Among the local Muslims, when persons meet, after shaking hands, one kisses his own hand and then with it touches his own forehead and his chest. This is a gesture expressing sincerity of mind and heart. Perhaps this is the origin of the Badjao wedding custom of uniting with the bride by touching her on the head and heart.

Soon afterwards, the imam seats the groom beside his bride, with his face also turned towards the wall of the head and his back towards the people. They remain briefly in silence in this position. Then someone, often a relative of the bride, goes up to the couple. He puts his hands on the shoulders of the groom and then the bride, and invites them to turn around towards the people, guiding them with his hands.

In the simple play of these orientations, the deep religious mystery of the Badjao marriage is hidden. One only has to recall that the wall of the head opens to the world of cosmic sacredness. At that precise moment, it is midday and the sun is at its height. Facing the wall of the head, groom and bride are brought into the presence of their ancestors and of Umboh. They enter a world filled with power and danger, for which they had been prepared with the morning bath.



Wedding Rite. Wall of the head or "wall of Umboh" (1); bride with back to crowd and facing the wall of Umboh (2); groom (3); officiating imam (4); relatives and friends representing society (5); tepoh (6).

Then turning around towards the opposite side, in the direction of the wall of the feet, they return to society. They are back among their people who are waiting for them. By turning their backs, they went away as individuals. They are returned to society as a couple. They are received by relatives and friends as husband and wife—a new family. The religious rite proper is finished.

From now on the atmosphere is more relaxed. The young couple, seated on tepoh, receives the congratulations, the greetings, or the teasing remarks of relatives and friends. The grand celebrations will take place in the evening.

The third day appears to be a rather wearisome event. Only the more well-to-do persons organize a little feast for the evening—and usually as an informal happening for the enjoyment of the young. The third day is useful as a catch-all for necessary rites that have no place on the first two days. The most frequent is the introduction of the couple to their new hut. Another is the rite to settle tensions resulting from elopement. If a couple marries against the will of the parents, they will celebrate a rite on the third day when they go back home to be reconciled with their parents. Elopement deserves a brief description.

Elopement

When their parents object to the marriage, the young couple appeals to the community. Initially, friends offer support. Next, the various leaders intercede, first as individuals and finally as a group. Gathered in council, they seek to convince the parents. If they are unsuccessful, they literally throw up their hands. Indirectly, they signal that if the two young persons want to, they can "flee" together.

Their escape consists of the momentous decision to take refuge in the hut of a leader. It is a decisive act, by which those concerned publicly compromise themselves. They implicitly declare their wish to deprive the parents of their authority by an appeal to a higher authority. From now on the leader will take the place of the parents. It is up to him to see that the two young persons do not sleep together before the marriage. He assumes the right to give away the bride and to receive the dowry in compensation.

Elopement is of greatest concern to the family of the prospective bride. If the young man's parents object, he has no choice but to elope if he wants to marry. If he goes against his parents' wishes, he loses the possibility of raising the money for the dowry. Without a dowry one cannot get married. The woman, on the other hand, does not need parental consent to get married. Should they object to her marriage, her parents stand to lose face, as well as the dowry. Hence, before pushing their daughter to despair, they con-

order the consequences carefully. If a loss of authority seems inevitable, they can only take the boat and go with their daughter to live somewhere else. This decision often comes when it is already too late. At other times, they manage to leave, but not to succeed in putting enough water between the daughter and her beloved.

The bride's parents and relatives obviously do not participate in the wedding. This boycott is their formal protest against the losses they have suffered. But formal reconciliation always follows on the third day, the day after the wedding. In procession with her groom, the bride is brought back to her parents to apologize and ask for acceptance.

The parents surrender. Later, they will have the time and means to take revenge. It should not be forgotten that among the Badjaos, marriage is matrilocal. The couple goes to live with the parents of the bride. Where a union is unwelcome, the couple will face a difficult existence. If they have eloped, there would not even be the problem of returning a dowry in the event of a divorce.

Time-Space Dimension

A three-day wedding celebration is usually affordable only by the affluent, and there are not many affluent Badjaos. The period is usually shortened and often exceptions must be made in the rites. Sometimes everything takes place in only one day when one wants to keep things simple, perhaps because there is not enough money for the celebration. To complicate matters, the groom often comes from a distant island. When this is the case, as soon as the group of the groom arrives, they immediately present the dowry. After a short interval of perhaps a few hours, the spouses receive the bath. Finally, after another interval but before the sun sets, the rite of union is celebrated.

Here, since the right times could not be respected, their meaning is not grasped. The bath does not take place in the morning, and the rite of the union does not wait for midday. The rites are only spaced in time, a minimum artificially set to preserve their diverse identities. In its way, the ideal

underlies the entire ritual process. The ideal is that each rite should have its own time, because only in its proper time can it find its cosmic fullness.

Before the rite of union, the spouses must remain separated. This precept is not always easy to follow. The presentation of the dowry generally takes place in the hut of the bride. But if the hut is too small to allow privacy, in order not to be seen by the groom, the bride seeks refuge elsewhere with friends. If the groom and his group come from a distant village, they are often accommodated for the night in the huts of the relatives of the bride. Again, the bride must leave her house and sleep in another place.

She will be able to return home the day after, for the wedding, but not before the groom has left. The rite of the arm for the groom could take place in any hut, but not the same one in which the bride previously took refuge. The bride and the groom must be in separate huts, not facing in the same direction and not face to face. These are impromptu devices which utilize orientations in space. They have the purpose of visualizing the separation that allows the passage and the union to be ritualized.

DEATH

Once death has been confirmed, the dead person, still lying along the religious axis with the head towards the wall of the head, is turned ninety degrees. The body is laid at the center of the hut along the social axis. This is a simple action but always accompanied by much grief and weeping. In its full significance, the movement carries and expresses the entire Badjao cosmology. In this final position, the dead person most truly describes what can be called "the orientation of the dead." Perpendicular across the religious axis, the body is in the position that most forcefully contradicts "the orientation of the living." This is the orientation that commands and inspires the entire existence of the Badjao people.

On the orientation of the living (the religious axis), when still among them, the deceased person had organized daily

existence and planned the search for the sacred. The person's eyes had been on it during the humble prayers of each day. The whole body had lain on it on the solemn occasions of the Umboh Pai Baha-o. On it that person had sought comfort and help in sickness. The mother had lain along that orientation when that person had come into the world, and there remained during the agony that accompanied that person out of the world.

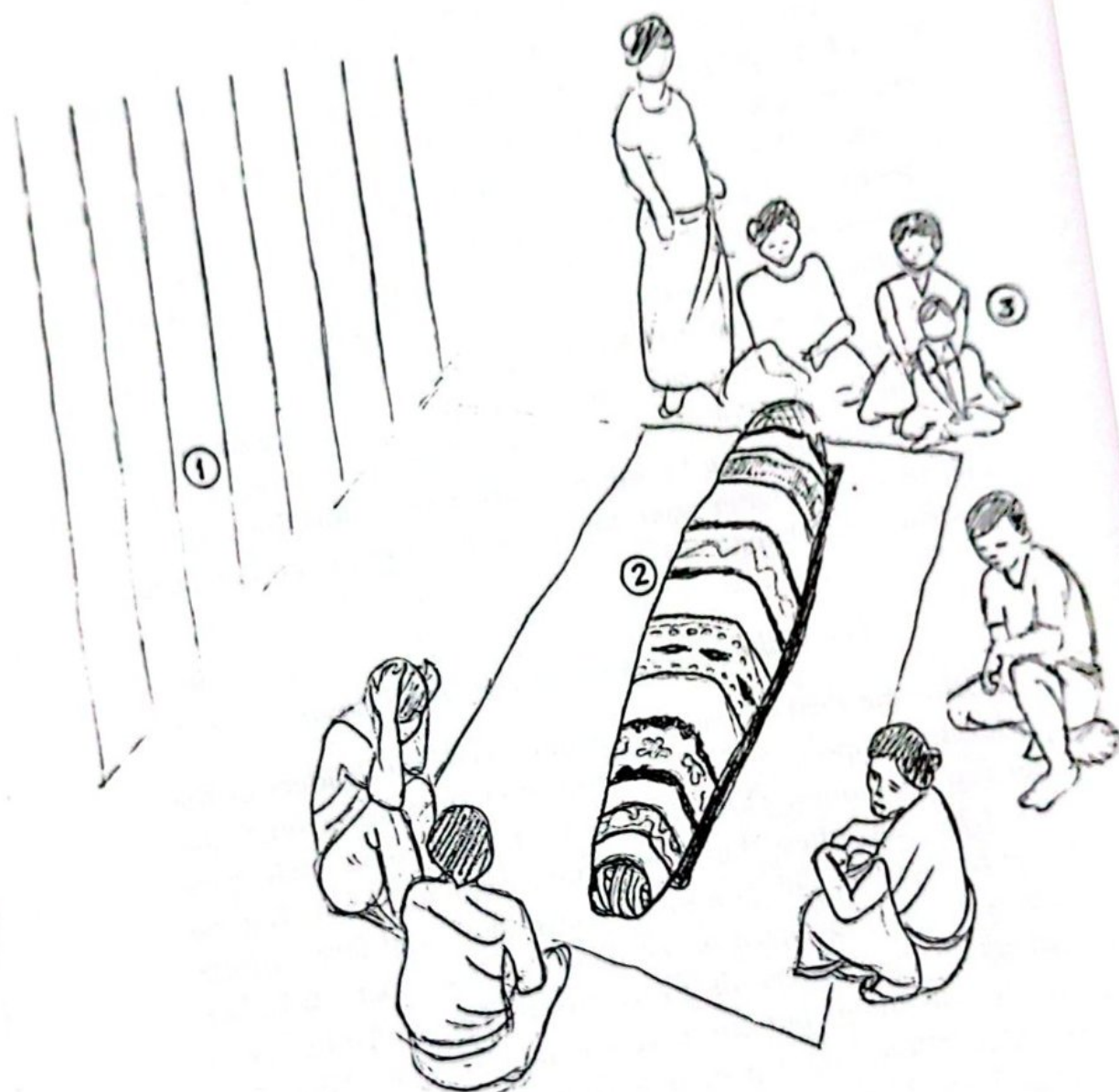
The change of position removes the dead from the orientation of the living. It is the official act with which a person is declared dead. This is the dramatic beginning of the initiatory process with which the body is accompanied to its new dwelling—the cemetery—and the spirit is introduced into its new world—the realm of the dead. It is a solemn way of declaring that a person no longer belongs to human society.

In the activities that follow, three principal moments can be recognized. The first two, the wake and the burial, center around the body of the dead person. The third, another wake, takes place after the burial, but this time beside the spirit of the dead. This latter wake for the spirit of the dead has been described in chapter 4.

The Wake by the Body of the Dead Person

Once the death is ritually pronounced, the leaders of the grieving kampong gather. In haste they organize a small collection of money. Contribution is spontaneous. Each gives what he can, often the little money kept for food. But no one holds back. This is a social convention, and fear and the desire to calm the spirit of the dead play their part. With the collection, the leaders all go to the market. Everyone wants to do something, but there is not much to be done. Not doing anything, or worse, delegating to others, would be judged as absenteeism. They buy what is needed for the wake—a half sack of rice, three or four kilos of sugar, cigarettes; and what is needed for the burial—the material for wrapping the body, the incense for the prayer, and so forth.

Meanwhile, the people begin to gather around the dead person who now rests on a tepoh, covered with a multicolored batik cloth. Relatives and friends sit around him. Neighbors



The Orientation of the Dead. Wall of the head or "wall of Umboh" (1); corpse (2) positioned parallel to the wall of the head; mourners (3).

and acquaintances take turns. They enter the hut, sit in a corner, remain for a while, and then leave. When a person dies in the morning, he may be buried in the afternoon of the same day, but in general it is preferable to wait until the next day. This is always the case when one dies in the afternoon. The wake develops mainly in the evening, when the people come back from work.

With the sunset and the arrival of the first shadows, lanterns are lighted and hung outside, giving light on the gangway in front of the nearby huts. People gather in small groups around the cooking fires. Visitors from afar are lodged in the huts near the house of the dead person. In these same huts, the people of the village who intend to join in the mourning take a nap now and then. They stay around and are ready "in case there is a need." Thus, in the hut of the dead and those of the neighborhood, people remain awake, "to keep company with the beloved dead." They say, "It is the last night that he remains in his house with his relatives. Tomorrow evening he will be down there," and with a nod of the head they indicate the island of the cemetery, "alone in his grave."

Two significant aspects of the wake deserve to be mentioned.

"Homages to the Dead." Participation in the mourning is a social event, with assistance and gifts given and received as homage to the dead person. The Badjaos say that in this spirit they give the money to the leaders before they go to the market. Gifts in kind, mostly food, can be given directly to the relatives of the dead person. In the same spirit of homage, the relatives receive these gifts and take care of the visitors. Using the food received, they see to it that there is a bit of food for everybody. Cooked rice is flavored with a pinch of sugar on top, the most practical and economical solution to feed the many who come. Those who give food know that their homage to the dead also helps pay for their supper. Cigarettes are available and at times coffee. Special care is given to those who help and, above all, to the imam who presides over the funeral rites. Aside from food, he expects gifts and money. All are offerings made in homage to the dead person.

There are also homages less material. As already mentioned, mostly in the course of the funeral rites, the *Badjaos* love to perform small plays. By making use of the so-called "signs" of the social personality of a dead person, they reconstruct scenes from his life.

Setti Lima, a middle-aged childless widow, had just died. She used to pass her time talking and chewing tobacco with two women friends. During the wake in her honor, her two friends were invited to sit beside her body. After a short address of homage to the dead person, the necessary things for "a tobacco-chewing session" were put in front of them: the tobacco, the betel nut, the white lime powder. The women, wholly taken up in their roles, once again cut the betel nut, chopped the tobacco, and with almost stylized movements, prepared the pulp for chewing. In the process they lingered over memories, speaking of their friend. This small rite presented a scene reenacted from Setti Lima's habits and relationships among the living. It relived the atmosphere in which Setti Lima found her social personality, giving her the pleasure of a bygone time and keeping her company.

The scene during the wake of Manawasa Puasa was different. He was a married man who had lived with his young wife and son, still a baby, in the house of his brother. The brother had paid the dowry and found a wife for Puasa. Here an offering of food was given, the most common of all offerings. The brother of the dead and the young widow were guided to sit, one in front of the other, beside the dead person. First, the widow addressed her husband, promising to respect his relatives. She then presented a bowl of boiled rice to her brother-in-law, who took and ate a pinch. Widow and brother-in-law then exchanged seats. He, in turn, addressed his brother and promised hospitality and respect for the wife and child. He offered the same bowl of rice to the young widow sitting in front. With tears in her eyes and a lump in her throat, she swallowed her pinch of rice. In the symbolic context of the daily meal, they relived the setting of family relationships precisely as the dead person would have wished it. These were also re-creations with the purpose of pleasing and keeping him company.

"The Song of the Dead." The so-called "song of the dead" evokes a custom rather widespread among the local Muslims, especially the more well-to-do. The night before the funeral, they employ persons, usually women, to cry over the dead person. They cry, shouting a continuous lament in which texts from the Koran are used. But the Badjao song of the dead has particular connotations. It is less formal and more well attended. It is a lament full of sadness. The words are a mixture of Arabic turned into Sama which do not express understandable concepts. It is one of those prayers that are "true," that is, powerful and therefore efficacious. It sounds like a short strophe that begins with a main tune and ends on lesser tunes. Once finished, it is started all over again and repeated continuously.

The imam begins the song, followed by his colleagues who are seated with him around the body of the dead person. Then those present join in freely. They can very well enter the hut, take a seat, and stay in silence. Or start a conversation with the one beside them. Those who participate in the song do not worry about harmony. All are free to start and linger on their strophe as long as they like. The result is a mixture of voices that produces a sense of choral grief. This continues for the whole night. The song tends to weaken in the late hours, only to pick up again more mournfully and desperately with the first light of the morning, on the day of the burial.

Funeral Rites

The funeral preparations begin discreetly with the measured cutting of the bandages for wrapping the dead person. The head cover is cut in the form of a triangle. Some long thin strips, rolled up, will serve as cords. Bandages and cords are all ritually washed in a basin of fresh water, sometimes containing an aromatic substance which colors them light pink.

In the course of these preparations, the imam makes some cords for the wrists and puts them on himself and his helpers, with a prayer and the blowing on the joints. In this case, they are worn not after the job is done, but before starting.

"They have a protective purpose," they say. Symbolically, the cords "bind" the power of those who will work with a dead person, protecting them against excessive loss. Like the panday during birth, the imam and his helpers are working at the limits of existence, where being and nonbeing are more easily experienced.

Before the imam takes his place to begin his work, the dead person is undressed and cleaned. The stomach is pressed and freed from all it still carries. The body is then composed again on the tepoh, with a white handkerchief on the face and a hös tight around the naked body.

The funeral rites, the most important of the Badjao rites, can then begin. The first rite is the "real" bath, ideally done with only freshwater. Usually however, seawater is used, keeping the freshwater for the final ablution, just as when the people ordinarily wash themselves. In spite of the similarity, this remains essentially a ritual event. It clearly evokes the bath of the dead practiced by all the Islamic people who live in the area.

This bath can have different forms. It depends greatly upon the experience and fancy of the one who presides over it. Let me give an example: The imam squats on the left side of the dead person near the torso. On his head, he wears a white cloth wrapped as a turban. Nearby, there is a large basin filled with water. Two helpers take water from the basin in bowls and pass it on to the imam, who liberally pours it over the dead person. There is no hesitation about wetting the surroundings. The water flows abundantly everywhere. On the body, on the tepoh, and through the wooden planks of the floor, it flows down to the sea.

Praying, the imam carefully washes first the hands, one after the other, using seven bowls of water for each. Then he examines the fingernails and cleans and clips them with a small knife. The dirt and clippings are collected and placed in a small white handkerchief, spread nearby. He then does the same for the feet with the same number of ablutions. He also disposes of the dirt from the toenails on the handkerchief, closing it like a bundle and putting it for the moment in his pocket.

With the help of the assistants, the imam rolls the dead person on his left side to be able to wash the right side. Singing a melodious prayer in a low voice, he makes seven ablutions, starting from the head and down the side to the feet. The same action is then repeated along the other side. Finally, with the body flat on its back, one of the assistants goes down to the feet of the dead person. Holding the dead person by the heels, he opens the legs and positions himself right in the middle. With a linen, he enters under the hös of the dead person and cleans the orifices. At the same time, the imam, always praying, pours water on the hös at that level. Again, seven bowls of water are used. Once finished, the helper throws the dirty linen through the window into the sea.

Though the bath appears in diverse forms, its significance on several levels remains fundamentally the same. For the Badjaos, the practice of this bath is a sign of civilization. One who does not wash one's own dead does not know how to treat them. And one who does not know this is a primitive. The ultimate significance of the bath must be sought in its religious valences. Though not always made explicit, the connotations of the other ritual baths of liberation and initiation can be seen. With this bath, dead persons are liberated from possible bad influences. They are set free from their personality and from their world, and are initiated into a new life. Overall, the pragmatic interpretations prevail. Dead persons are washed as a sign of affection and respect. And the dead expect it. If their spirit should disturb the living afterwards, it could be due to the fact that the bath had not been done as it should have been. It must be done again.

After the bath, the dead person is dressed. If the deceased is a man, first the shorts are slipped on under the wet hös, which is then removed. Then the pants are put on, sometimes carefully tying them with a cord as a belt. Finally, the shirt is put on. Dressed up, the dead person is ready. The dead person appears as when alive, in his or her best clothes. At this point the imam and his helpers can grant themselves a cigarette and a short break.

There are very few Badjaos who use a coffin for their dead. Those who do, use coffins with big holes in the lower plank,

a device they say allows the bones to dry better. This custom is found among other tribal people of the area. The majority of the Badjaos simply use a tepoh in lieu of a coffin.

On the floor of the hut beside the dead person, three or four dry tepoh are spread, one on top of the other, with the roughest underneath and the more elaborate and beautiful on top. When the body of the dead is later wrapped, the most beautiful will be inside, closer to him. On top of the tepoh, the cords and bandages prepared at the beginning of the rites are spread, still soaked from washing. First come the cords, then the sheets to wrap the body, and at the top, the head cover. Talcum powder is sprinkled on the cloths, like on the diaper of a newborn.

The body of the dead is placed on the cloths. The hands are covered with a white linen. The bandaging begins. The imam takes a corner of the sheet near a shoulder and pulls it over across the body to the waist. He does the same from the other side, so that the two corners cross each other. From the sides, he takes up the sheet and completely wraps the body except for the head. He then takes the head cover, pulling the corners around the head and tying them on the face. The small bundle with the cut nails is hidden under the bandages, at the height of the groin.

At this point, the process of bandaging is momentarily suspended. After the relatives have had the opportunity of giving a final salute to the body of their beloved dead, the prayer begins. A bowl with burning charcoal is brought in. The imam puts incense in it. Then he loosens the white cloth on his head and passes the corners to his two helpers who hold it over the dead person and the imam like a tent. The imam prays on the bowl of incense and moves it along the body of the dead person. The helpers sway the white sheet overhead.

After the prayer, the process of bandaging resumes. Talcum and perfume are sprinkled on the bandages. The bandages, still loose, are now tightened with the cords. Then, one after the other, the various tepoh are rolled around the body and tied together. The dead person is enclosed in a cocoon. A batik is spread over as decoration.

The work of the imam is over for the moment, but popular practices continue. Sometimes a small mirror is placed upon the waiting corpse. Though not a native artifact, its use is very common. Small mirrors can also be widely seen on graves. They are said to have the purpose of "frightening the spirits." But one can find other explanations. The small mirror facing upwards on the corpse can also serve "to show the way to the sky," or "to bring the sky near the dead." Even a western object like a small mirror can open the way to sacred orientations and place people in different symbolic directions. The mirror calls to mind the sky, the realm of Tuhan, Umboh, and the ancestors.

Other things can also be placed beside the corpse, such as some food "for the dead," money for the imam, the bandage that the imam had on his head, or some umbrellas that will be used in the procession. All the things that serve, directly or indirectly, in the funeral ceremonies spontaneously find their place here.

Once the corpse has been arranged, there is a long interval to finish the preparations for the funeral and the digging of the grave. As long as it is possible to do the funeral before sunset, it is not worth worrying about. Everything is done without haste. It seems there is nothing more important to do. No one comes or goes in a hurry. If one enters the hut to pass on an urgent message, one waits before speaking. One does the same before going out. The dead person, who will go to the cemetery only reluctantly, could be offended.

The interval lingers on in the spirit of the wake. The "presentations of homage," described above, can be repeated, or made for the first time. Often, "to please the dead person," his or her favorite music is played on a tape recorder. There may be some dances, done by the widow, the daughter, or any friend. In tears and with faces distorted in grief, they dance with affection for the beloved dead. The men, seated around, smoke and watch.

The moment has come. The helpers take the corpse wrapped in the tepoh and put it on a stretcher, some old

boards held together by a pair of slats. The procession begins, led by the imam who has put the white bandage back on his head. He carries the bowl with the smoking incense and prays singing. The people around the coffin follow. Umbrellas are kept open over the corpse as a sign of honor. There is music. When possible, some women dance the *pang-igal*.

In the vicinity of the cemetery the party stops. Only the imam proceeds. The place is full of spirits which must be calmed down. He reaches the grave and enters it. With his bowl of incense, he prays at the four corners and along the walls to drive away the bad spirits. When finished, he signals the party to come in.

The imam examines the grave to make sure the final touches are done—the bottom cleaned once more, often made more comfortable with some planks. The imam and the helpers lower the dead person into the grave and arrange him with care. The imam then checks once more to be sure that the dead person is placed properly. When everything is finally ready, before the closing the imam and the helpers untie the cords on their wrists and throw them into the grave. Contaminated by death, they must be left with the dead.

Badjao graves are not very deep, less than a meter. After the dead person is placed in it, the grave is not refilled. It is simply covered at ground level with some boards supported by wooden strips. The boards are usually recovered from the stretcher, and thus these also are disposed of. Earth is heaped over this. The corpse lies in a sort of empty room. Stones are placed around the grave to delimit it and hold in the soil. On the grave, above the head, a special stone called the *sundok* is placed. The imam makes a final prayer with the incense, along the grave and finally on the *sundok*. At the end, he pours water on the *sundok*. With this, the burial is concluded.

The only remaining necessity is to take care of the dead person's spirit. This is done through a second wake—described in chapter 4. The second wake will begin on the evening of the same day as the burial, in the house of the dead person. Improvements on the grave will be done later

on. When possible, it is usually enclosed with a fence and covered with a roof, so as to look like a small hut. Like every human creature, the spirit must also be able to find protection and enjoy its privacy.

The *Sundok*

The Islamized peoples among whom the Badjaos live sometimes place a wooden sign on the tomb, instead of a stone, that indicates the gender of the dead person. Some Badjaos, who love to imitate, feel obliged to follow this custom. This is usually done some months after the burial. At the beginning, a sundok is always placed on the tomb. The substitution is an exception rather than the rule.

The sundok is often just an ordinary stone, of no particular shape but often rather oblong. It is placed on the grave "as a sign to indicate where the head is." More than just an indication of the disposition of the body, the sundok visualizes "the side of the head"—just as in the boat and the hut, the wall of the head is a point of reference by which one communicates with Umboh and the ancestors. Thus the sundok becomes the medium of communication with the spirit of the dead person.

It begins to assume this cultic relevance from the moment it is placed on the grave. As mentioned above, the imam concludes the rite of burial and honors the dead person with a prayer addressed to him or her through the sundok. Water is poured on the sundok, and the bowl of incense is left at the base of the sundok at the end of the rite. On the evening of the funeral, the wake will begin in the house of the dead person. This will conclude after a few days when the imam takes the spirit to the tomb where the body of the dead person has been resting. The spirit will be released on the sundok.

As time goes by, this stone will become the very icon of the spirit. Every address to the spirit at the grave will be made through the sundok. Offerings will be placed beside it. The prayers or water used to pacify, honor, or invoke the spirit of the dead person will center on the sundok.

In the end, the sundok will be the favorite dwelling place of the spirit of the dead. It is the spirit's last defense against the wearing of time that will slowly obliterate the physical remains beneath and the memories in the minds of the relatives. Only in the sundok will the spirit survive to narrate its own story. This can be mythicized, as in the case of the tombs of the "saints," which we will now turn to.

Where History Creeps In

OUTSIDE THE URBAN CENTERS, but especially in the more remote islands and villages, the Badjao dead can be buried in any secluded place. This is true even today, in spite of the authorities trying to keep some order. However, because in the past this was the custom, tombs are found almost everywhere, isolated or in groups. Some are recent, but most are old. Of most, no one knows to which family they belong. No one knows who is buried there. They are "nobody's tombs."

Still, all are treated with respect, even these last. Though they suffer the havoc of time, and of the jungle—often small shrubs at first, then trees, grow around them and destroy them, reducing them to formless mounds of soil and stones—the people do not touch them. Fear of the spirits and of their punishment is more than enough to keep possible profaners away.

This fate does not always befall the mystery of their identity. It is not unusual, in fact, that where history ends, popular love for fable begins, later always confirmed by experiences of a religious kind. Some of these tombs evolve into being seen and described as the seats of extraordinary beings. They become real cultic places.

NEW SACRED PLACES

Among these tombs two particularly deserve our attention. They are on the small island of Bongao. Aside from the

Badjao, they are sacred also to the Sama, Tausug, Chinese, and Cebuano. All these people come in pilgrimage from islands both near and far like Sibutu, Bilatan, and even Tabawan.

One tomb stands on the extremity of a small peninsula in the area of Pasiagan, a few meters from the sea. It is on a crag of a black rock, with an age-old tree beside it. It looks like an enclosure of masonry, perforated and painted white, around two meters by three, slightly taller than one meter. Inside is the real tomb, covered with rectangular curtains, hanging from the four sides of the enclosure. The tomb as well as the space around it appears to be always taken care of. The spontaneous devotion of pilgrims prompts this attention. Not very far away, on the shore at the limits of the forest, there is a place for the pilgrims to rest. Nipa roofing, supported by four poles, is enough for protection from the sun and bad weather.

The other tomb, undoubtedly the more important of the two, is at the top of Bud (Mount) Bongao. It is similar in structure to the one at Pasiagan, but different in that it is found in the middle of a forest thick with luxuriant vegetation, among ancient trees, in which packs of monkeys thrive. They move undisturbed. They are the monkeys of Bud Bongao. Here also, beside the tomb, there is a rudimentary shelter for pilgrims.

The two tombs are geographically related. The tomb of Pasiagan, in fact, is in the area where the principal path leading to the top of Bud Bongao starts. They are related—at least for the Badjaos—in the cult and above all in the myth. No one knows exactly who might be buried here. At any rate, it cannot be just anyone. With tombs so imposing in such special places, they can only be extraordinary persons. For the Badjaos, they are two *salim*. This is the title used for dead persons who were *salim* in life. Or, as it is sometimes said, *sahib* or *salip* (sharif). These people were prominent, because they were particularly powerful or particularly holy or both. The Badjaos often describe them as “powerful men.”

What is known about these two *salim* is only hearsay, often inconsistent. But this is not a problem. The Badjaos know that by now no one really remembers their true history. These

are events that happened in a faraway past. It is not even known definitely when. Many details must have been forgotten. What is known about them is only what "is narrated." What is usually told is that the two salim were brothers. One day they went fishing. But when they were in the open sea, they were surprised by a tremendous storm—or seaquake. Whatever the case, they foundered. They survived with difficulty. With some bamboo poles they put together a raft, climbed on it, and let themselves drift. One beautiful morning, after several days of being carried by the current, they arrived at the island of Bongao. It was Tuhan who wanted them to arrive there, where much later they died. The people buried them, each in the place of his death: the younger at Pasiagan, the elder on Bud Bongao where he had dwelt.

The mythical nature of the account is easily recognizable. The image of two brothers is found in various myths of Southeast Asia. The use of this myth binds together and exalts the two sacred places, emphasizing at the same time the superiority of the tomb on top of the mountain—that of the elder brother.

The two tombs each identify a sacred space. Before entering the enclosure, the pilgrim is invited to remove his shoes, a precept that recalls the Islamic custom before entering a mosque. Sometimes some also add ablutions. They wash their feet in the sea at Pasiagan, or with the water they bring along to Bud Bongao.

On each of these two tombs, a prayer is addressed to the salim buried there, honoring his spirit in the tombstone. Inside the enclosure in each of the places, there remains only a *sundok* that protrudes from the center of the cemented area. In describing this *sundok*, the Badjaos say, "It is a stone as of a man or a woman." They say this not in the sense that it shows human semblances, but in the sense that it stands in the place, or is an incarnation of the spirit, of a human person. In fact, they specify, "Like on the tombs." It is before this *sundok* that the faithful prostrate themselves, pray, and make offerings. As gift, they usually bring incense, perfume, rice cakes, eggs, money. To this is often added a piece of cloth, with which "to dress up" the *sundok*.

The prayer on the tomb, near the sundok, is not made as an isolated action. It is found in the cultic context of the pilgrimage. The sacrifice of the journey is prized. There are those who take pains to make the whole way on foot. Even if it were an individual act of cult, usually no one would dare do it alone. The two places are rather isolated and could be dangerous. Often, for the prayer and the presentation of the offerings, an imam is brought along. As in every pilgrimage, after the liturgical activity, a small snack is eaten—rice, cakes, coffee which the small company never forgets to bring with them.

The pilgrimage to one or both of the tombs can take place to fulfill a promise. But it is made also as a prayer of invocation, or as thanksgiving for benefits received. At any rate, it is not a liturgical activity done often. It is valued mainly in exceptional circumstances.

PAG-DUWA-A SALAMAT

Among the Badjaos, collective cultic acts—those involving an entire local community—are truly exceptional. Only two are known: First of all is the Pag-patulak. This is celebrated when there is a need to free the village from some evil, like a contagious disease or famine. The other is the Pag-duwa-a Salamat, a thanksgiving ceremony. This is the rarer, no doubt, of the two.

In the living memory of the people who now live in Luuk Bangka, the Pag-duwa-a Salamat has been celebrated only twice. The first was in 1972. As recounted in chapter 1, they were forced in that year to abandon their village in Sanga Sanga, refused by the people of Pasiagan, and later welcomed by the local Christian missionaries. Offshore their land, the Badjaos have been able to establish themselves, founding a new village, Luuk Bangka. The Pag-duwa-a Salamat was celebrated in recognition of the hospitality and help received on that occasion.

The same community had the occasion to celebrate anew the Pag-duwa-a Salamat only twenty years afterwards. This time, it was in thanksgiving for considerable financial help from the

government that allowed the reconstruction of the entire village. Eighty family groups each received the gift of a new hut with wooden walls and a galvanized roof. The rite took place on March 2, 1992. For the Badjaos, it was an ordinary day at the time of the full moon.

On the previous days the leaders went visiting among the families of the different *kampong* to announce the event and to collect the money needed for the celebration, around twenty pesos from every family. On the day of the feast, when the morning was still fresh, the nine leaders of the community and other persons who wanted to join, took a jeepney and went in pilgrimage to Pasiagan to pray on the tomb of the salim.

All nine leaders were imams. Only four, however, could enter the enclosure of the tomb, under the tent. The space was too small. After greeting the salim, they dressed up his sundok with a piece of white cloth, around two meters long. They then began the prayer, moving the bowl of incense around the sundok and spraying it with perfume. The prayer was simultaneously addressed to Tuhan, to Umboh, and to the salim. In a chorus of mixed voices, they gave thanks for the help that they had received from the government, from the missionaries, from the good persons of Bongao. Now and then, there was an Arabic sequence. They concluded the prayer, presenting five coins beside the sundok as offering. Leaving the enclosure, they joined the others who waited for them in the nearby shelter over a small snack of rice and sugar. The tomb on top of Bud Bongao was not visited.

Back at their village, on the way to their huts, they visited all three *saitan* that were nearby. These dwelt in three different trees. Two were well known. The third was known only by some. The group gathered around each of these trees and the leaders presented banners and rice cakes. Then they prayed with the incense and perfume, repeating the same sentiments expressed shortly before on the tomb at Pasiagan.

While the leaders went visiting the different sacred places, the village went about its usual daily activities. The community began to get involved in the Pag-duwa-a Salamat only at midday. The whole village was supposed to gather in a nearby

compound for a shared lunch. Each person was to bring along his or her own food. The affair was suspended at the last moment for lack of organization. They had to content themselves with a fragmented social lunch. Each leader gathered his own household, each in a separate hut.

Here, the food each had brought along was spread in the center of a *tepol* beside the ritual cakes. The people sat around in a circle. Squatting in the middle, beside the food, the leading imam made the prayer with the incense, thanking Tuhan, Umbuh, and the ancestors. After presenting the rice cakes as offering, he distributed them among those present, according to their importance. Coffee was shared in the same way. Then the individuals freely helped themselves to the food at the center.

The community gathered again in the evening after sunset for the dance of the *pang-igal* which always concludes each feast. This time, the Badjaos had engaged what they call a musical group. A singer was accompanied by teenage boys, who all sang to a cassette played with the help of a car battery. The feast went on—as usual—until the first hours of the next morning.

ABOUT SALIM

On looking closely, the Pag-duwa-a Salamat is not a very original rite. It appears to be a sequence of various types of prayers. What are original are the idea of a thanksgiving day and how it is organized. The liturgical action follows the pattern of a pilgrimage. The destinations are all the places sacred to the Badjaos—the dwellings of the saitan and of the salim without discrimination. They are places where one can find a direct and physical contact with the sacred—and with the spirits that live there. The Badjaos invoke all the spirits that inhabit their religious cosmos.

In this ensemble of prayers, the forms and sustaining concepts of the cult proper to each spirit are gathered and placed in comparison. Tuhan keeps his uncontested position. He always remains the one and only. After him, the saitan and

salim assume a subordinate role. As the Badjaos say, these are only "mediators." Yet they too figure as sacred powers. One does not bother to specify whether theirs is a power they have on their own, or a power that they derive from Tuhan through their "powerful mediation." It is a matter of truth that they are powerful and because of this, one has recourse to them. Umboh should not be forgotten. He also is a mediator. But there is no danger of confusion. He is always the first. If the salim and the saitan are now also perceived as mediators, they are always secondary.

But the position of the saitan becomes problematic. In association with the salim, they are somewhat undervalued. They assume a role of mediation, a connotation rather new to them, derived by analogy from the salim. This analogy unfortunately beclouds the "demonic" religious experience that had originally fostered their recognition and their characterization. In this context, the saitan become perceived no longer as absolute realities, but are seen and treated just like "powerful men." Moreover, one should not exclude the possibility that this humanization may be partly responsible for their reduction to the rank of bad spirits. Should the Badjaos be asked whether the saitan or salim have more power, the Badjaos without hesitation would answer the latter.

From this association the salim could only gain. By analogy, they receive from the saitan attributes that render them almost absolute entities. This cannot but be surprising, most of all when one recalls that the salim are not originally Badjao realities. They are a product of popular Islamic religiosity. Like the Confucius-bred Chinese or the Christianized Cebuanos, the Badjaos also invoke "a foreign power" when they invoke the salim. They are a power recognized through a derived, not a direct, experience. The seats of the salim are not ancient Badjao tombs. They could be Sama. They are at any rate sacred places that belong to the history of other peoples.

The admission of the salim into the Badjao religious world could be due to the fact that the Badjaos do not always find the help of their own mediating spirits satisfactory. Perhaps they feel the need for the help of stronger spirits. The sundok may also have acted as a mediating force. The tombstone in

which the spirit of the salim dwells, shows the same symbolic nature as the stones in which the saitan find their home. In any regard, what counts is not the ethnicity of the sacred power, but its efficacy.

The attachment of the salim to its sundok does not become a limitation on its movement. Like the saitan, the salim is also a spirit. Therefore, he always remains free from the constraints of the material. As already seen, the concept "spirit" is a personified abstraction that often allows an interchange of attributes even among spirits essentially different. Because of this, the salim can assume some characteristics of the saitan, and vice versa. The spirits then are like the wind. They possess ubiquity. As pointed out elsewhere, below the sea a powerful salim dwells. It is with this salim that the navigator wrestles when he is in difficulty. To this salim are presented the offerings in incestuous marriages. In truth, it should be a saitan. But far from the seat of his original manifestations, he can also be called salim and thus become more powerful than the saitan.

The introduction of this foreign power into the Badjao religious world represents an important innovation. The cult of the salim, in a sense, presupposes the apotheosis of a "powerful man." This could be considered a first form of making a spirit divine, not by religious contemplation of the cosmos, but by the experience of human history.

It is the history of the person that rests in the sacred tomb. The person buried there is no longer an anonymous being. His personal name is not remembered, but he is known. He is called "salim." This is because he is identified through his social status, as often happens even among the living. With his social status, something of his life is remembered: his power and holiness.

On these sacred tombs a cult sprouts that closely evokes what in other religions one finds around the effigy of a saint. The sundok does not yet show human semblances; after all, this cult is developing in a Muslim environment where the use of images is discouraged. But for the people, the salim are real and proper "saints," on whose tombs one goes to

pray. In this context, the sundok, the salim's dwelling place, tends to be seen as the icon of the "saint": a sacred image, an object of cult.

THE SACRED MOUNTAIN

Bud Bongao, the mountain on whose peak rests the most powerful salim, appears like a pinnacle of black rock. With its spiked walls it stands out imposingly at the edge of the island by the same name.

The main path there initially unwinds on open terrain, beneath coconut trees, but not for long. Slowly it begins to climb until it steepens along a narrow valley, laboriously opening a passage through the green of the woods that shelters the pilgrims from the rays of the sun. The atmosphere is hot and humid. Only the sounds of birds and wild animals break the silence.

In the second stage, on a difficult passage over a bare rock, the ascent is made easy by a flight of some two hundred steps of cement. It was built by a rich Chinese, in recognition of a grace received there. This is a further sign of the importance that the salim of Bud Bongao has in the local popular religiosity. Only pilgrims take care of these sacred places, which do not appear at all abandoned.

After the stairs, the path is less steep. It enters again into the forest, and zigzags until it arrives at a small opening, almost hidden by very high trees. There, in a corner, is the sacred tomb.

The famous monkeys of Bud Bongao can invariably be met along the climb. They appear from the green and approach without fear. In the vicinity of the tomb, they gather in groups. They freely come down to the small clearing, cross it, enter the tomb. They move around with the indifference of those who feel at home. Customarily, the pilgrims who climb all the way up there carry bananas to feed them. They are "sacred" monkeys. In fact no one dares to take them. Hunted elsewhere to be eaten or sold, monkeys here find a haven. The sacredness of the place makes them sacred.

One cannot help but notice the numerous pieces of cloth and plastic bags that hang from the branches of trees all around. They can give the impression of having been put there for the purpose of offending sight and good taste—and reducing the sacred place to a garbage dump. The pilgrims are responsible for all this havoc. Before going down, every person is supposed to leave behind what he or she had brought along.

This questionable religious custom can have a dual explanation. The rather difficult climb to the sacred mountain is not made, at least by the pilgrims, for the purpose of sight-seeing. It assumes the significance of an initiatory ascent. One climbs to the summit to free oneself from the "old man" overwhelmed by physical or moral evil, or by the religious obligation to fulfill a promise, in order to descend afterwards as a "new man." Pilgrims ritualize this divesting and spiritual renewal by leaving on top what they had brought along.

The second explanation can be founded on the idea of sacred pollution. On the sacred peak, beside the sacred tomb and in the presence of the salim, pilgrims and what they bring with them are exposed to the sacred and saturated by it. Leaving behind cloths and plastic bags becomes a precaution. In this way, they avoid bringing back home objects that could be profaned or, at any rate, that could turn out to be dangerous.

The pilgrimage to the tomb on top of Bud Bongao, with the various religious customs that accompany it, appears as a form of specialized cult—ritual activity in honor of the salim living there. If one follows the explanations given by popular religiosity, one would say that this form of cult depends exclusively on the presence of this particular salim in this place. In short, Bud Bongao is a sacred mountain because its peak is sacred. The peak in turn is sacred because a particularly sacred tomb is found there. It is the most sacred that the natives know. It is the tomb of an especially powerful salim.

The Badjao religious person continues by explaining that this salim is powerful because in life he was a powerful man—a great saint. This is deduced from the myth that binds his tomb to that of Pasiagan, or from the circumstantial evidence

that one can easily gather from around his tomb—the continuous flow of pilgrims who go seeking his intercession, and the respect in which his contemporaries must have held him, from the moment that they buried him in such a unique place.

But from the point of view of critical analysis, these explanations have to be reconsidered. It is probable that this salim, in life, was a powerful man, at least in the profane sense of the term. One need know nothing more than that he managed to get buried there, up high. But this might be so mainly because that place was not just any place, but a special place. Bud Bongao was a sacred mountain, even before the saint arrived.

Within the radius of fifty meters from the tomb of the salim, there are two other tombs, very recent Muslim tombs. Down in the town, someone undoubtedly knows who is buried in those new tombs. Yet these also seem to be on their way to becoming sacred places—dwellings of saints. Often the pilgrims who climb Bud Bongao, after stopping by the principal tomb, also pause to visit the two other tombs. This indicates decisively that it is originally the mountain that sanctifies the persons who are buried on its peak, and not vice versa.

One can see here a way by which new beliefs can be taken up into the Badjao religious world without causing an upheaval. Bud Bongao is a unique buttress of rock. Among people where the stones still speak, it suggests a reflection on the mystery of that power which the Badjaos perceive as the absolute spirit. In its form as a mountain, it incorporates the archetype of the cosmic mountain and points to the sky where the power, that is beyond all powers, dwells.

Like the saitan discovered with the help of natural symbols, the salim who are derived from the images of a *historicomythical* anamnesis seem destined to remain inadequate spirits—powers unable to fully answer to the expectations of the religious person. The saitan as well as the salim are basically no more than mediators.

On Bud Bongao the Badjaos never fail to address a prayer to Tuhan, who dwells in the sky. He is the source of every power. The true absolute who always remains beyond and above all his possible manifestations on earth or in history.

Epilogue

SEVERAL TIMES I HAVE BEEN ASKED questions about the roots of the Badjaos' religion. Oftentimes they were simply inquiries on the origin of this or that ritual or belief. How did a ritual so complex as the Pag-timbang or the Pag-hinan ni Tuhan come into being? Who for the first time used the metaphor of the human body and developed the *pag-umboh*? From where could possibly have come the idea of a mediator like Umboh? Who could have defined with such precise symbology the "wholly other"?

By these questions one seeks information on the past of this people, in the conviction that there should have been one or more "founders" to be discovered—some great spiritual leaders or imams endowed with charismatic qualities, who gave a decisive push to the Badjaos' religious practice, revolutionizing or simply restoring and giving explicit form to traditional ethnic values fallen into disuse.

More often, questions such as these mask the doubt that this religion is not wholly flour from the Badjao sack. Beliefs and ritual should have derived, at least partly, from some other religion more advanced. The thought goes naturally to the Islamic religion which, in the area, shapes the entire social life. Could it not be possible that, for example, the idea of Umboh be traceable to some influence of this kind?

Suppositions of this kind can find support in the fact that the Badjaos' religious practice is loaded with Islamic terms

and Arabic formulae. These are further encouraged by the popular conviction that the Badjaos are nothing but second-rate Muslims. At any rate, beyond any Islamic context, the Badjao people remains always part of a larger world.

Without diminishing the possible value of these hypotheses—though difficult to work with, especially when the historical dimension is practically undetectable—phenomenology of religion encourages one to lend more attention to the religious man—man when reflecting on himself and his life in the world and in front of the fragmented images of the contingent, experiences the nostalgia of the ideal solutions: the sacred forms. In the last instance, as the Badjao culture is made by the Badjao, so the Badjao religion is made by the Badjao religious man.

The originality of the Badjao religion further proves this conviction. This religion is original first of all in the sense that it does not appear as a collage of beliefs and rituals amongst themselves unrelated. Rather the primary beliefs and the main rituals constituting this religion appear as an organic whole proceeding from a set of basic principles. These are principles very typical: not from a book but of cosmic nature. The very formulae and prayers coming from the Islamic tradition are Badjao formulae and prayers, fitting organically into a qualifying system in which they assume a new meaning, different from the previous meaning.

This religion is original above all in the sense that in a special way it evokes the origin of religion. It does so not in the way of an archaeological artifact speaking of a faraway, bygone past, but mainly in the sense that it recalls and represents the primary forms of religiosity: before any positive revelation; before, even the complex elaborations that characterize the more universal religious traditions. It appears as a religion simple and elemental—as the environment in which the Badjaos are, as the life the Badjaos live.

In it one can more easily see and study the religious man. That religious man that can be found in all religions, even the most complex.

One should not be surprised, then, that also in these one finds images, symbols, metaphors, beliefs, and rituals evoking

the Badjaos' religious experience. Forms like the sky, the rocks, the trees, the mountains in which the religious tension finds its expression can be easily found in the more complex religions, although often in literary form. Umboh—as the Badjaos themselves explain—is nothing more than the Adam and Eve of the great religious traditions. At these levels, if of influences one has to speak, they should be recognized as setting off from the primitive religion towards the great historic traditions, rather than in the opposite direction.

For these reasons, to meet with a religion like the Badjaos' is always refreshing. It certainly is for the researcher. It brings him closer to the origins—and facilitates an understanding—of the religious man. It facilitates the comprehension of the various religions, especially the more complex which by nature would be more difficult to comprehend. Putting into focus the religious man, it explains why religion can be relevant to the man of all times and places. Lastly, it can be refreshing for the believer. Sensitive to this information, one can better understand oneself and one's own faith.

Notes

1. Chapter 3 is an expansion of a paper given at the "International Seminar on the Badjao Communities," Jakarta, 1993.

2. "Badjao" not "Bajau," is the indigenous name the Tawi-Tawi Badaos use to call themselves. It is with this name that they distinguish themselves from the other Sama-speaking people in the southern Philippines, who are called and who call themselves simply "Sama."

3. Because the Badaos have already been studied for a number of years, considerable ethnographic information on them is available. In our bibliography, the material carefully documented by H. Arlo Nimmo and Clifford Sather merits special attention. These two scholars focus on the group to which the Badaos described in this book belong: the former studying the Badaos of the Sulu Sea; the latter, those along the adjacent coastline of North Borneo.

Our book pinpoints the Badaos of Tawi-Tawi, noted by A. Nimmo in *Sea People of Sulu* (1972), well worth reading. It should be kept in mind, however, that thirty years have elapsed between his research and mine. A number of situations have changed, some dramatically.

The same author also wrote two articles on the religion of these people (Nimmo 1990a, b). They are mostly ethnographic. In the bulk of the data about spirits and rituals one finds several general ideas, intuitions, and suggestions derived from beliefs that are not clear or explicit. They are valuable provided that one takes them as seminal nuclei of Badjao religious thought.

4. In Southeast Asia, yellow is considered the royal color. It is often associated with gold. Perhaps this concept began in Indonesia, where legendarily gold is the primary color and everything originally was made of gold. Directly or indirectly, royalty, gold, and origins are found related to the sun or its light.

5. Though possible in theory, in practice the Badaos do not seem to have many *sumangat* that have been present since the beginning in distinct geographical areas.

6. The explanation for this shift of attention seems to be that the plant, as a living element, reveals in a more intense way the vitalistic dimension of the *saitan*. The religious practice, which seeks an interlocutor within the sacred power, tends to favor this revelation on life to the detriment of other revelations, no matter how original.

7. Similar symbolic readings can be reinforced, and sometimes even created, following upon some special religious experience. In Bongao, for example, another plant is well known for its "femininity," mainly because a person got sick after a dream where he saw "a *saitan* in the form of a woman" beside that plant.

8. In his description of the *lepa*, Sather (1985, 193) observed, "In addition to the bow, stern and midsection, every *lepa* also has a lateral *kokan*, or 'head side,' where family members lay their heads (*kok*) when sleeping or resting."

9. The Badjaos make large use of their most beautiful *tepoh*, to accommodate the persons whom they respect, or to perform on them their rituals.

10. There is never a simple and direct transfer from one place to another. This movement is done with a liturgical elaboration. As we shall see, when the *pag-umboh* is celebrated for a sick person, before being placed in the sacred space, the sacred matter is passed over the body of this person.

11. We avoid saying *imam* because it gives to this function too religious a connotation. On the other hand, it seems unsuitable to call him forthrightly a soothsayer, or diviner, or healer, or medicine man, because it might give the impression that one is dealing with a person different from an imam.

Glossary

The Badjaos are not overly concerned with linguistic purity. They easily borrow, and in their religious practice they largely make use of terms taken from the Islamic tradition. However, they do not necessarily use these terms with the same meaning that they may have in Islam.

Not only the meaning changes but the spelling is often altered. Moreover, the Badjaos themselves do not present a consistent vocabulary. Words may change from island to island. In relation to previous research, some transcriptions used here will be recognizable only by approximation. As far as possible, the author has tried to remain faithful to the current terminology of the Badjaos of Tawi-Tawi.

There is one exception. In naming their rites, the Badjaos often use a verb form rather than a noun. In place of these, I have considered it more suitable to use noun forms. For example, the rite which Badjaos call Mag-timbang (present progressive verb, "is weighing"), I have named Pag-timbang (gerund, "the weighing"), and so on, for all the other rites.

Agong: Native brass gong

Atahah kalluman: Long life. The summation of Badjao salvation. It stands, first of all, for the fullness of everyday life: good health and satisfaction. From an individual perspective, this is a life that has been fulfilled in maturity, before death in old age. It does not mean a life on earth without end. Death is accepted. This philosophy of acceptance is encoded in the so-called "dialogue of life," which compares human life to the life of the tree. However, because human realities are not truly real, from the experience of human limitations, Badjaos mirror an antithesis which is the only true life, the so-called "long life."

Barakat: Sacred power. First, it is the power of the absolute beings, the *saitan* and Tuhan. It is also a spiritual power believed to be possessed by certain spirits and persons who have been given this power by the absolute beings.

Batik: Cloth hand-dyed using the Indonesian wax-resist method; *bat-tik* in Sinama.

Biral: A small boat, often with outriggers, used by one or two persons at a time, propelled with a single or double-bladed paddle.

Bullah: A school of fish in the sea.

Circumcision: A man's puberty rite. The main liturgical action consists in wounding the prepuce so as to draw some blood. It "makes a man" out of a teenager by acknowledging his physical maturity; it establishes him in the male sexual identity and enables him to re-create unity with a woman. In fact, only circumcised men may get married. This is one of the great morning rites. See also *pag-islam*.

Djin: A name used for several very different spirits: (1) a freakish spirit that dwells with a *saitan* and troubles people; (2) a spirit that dwells in a person (this spirit can come from above, resulting the person's being possessed and behaving oddly; can also come from the historical or "real" ancestors, also called *umboh*—in this case, the spirit's mystical power sanctions the social status or role of a person); and (3) by extension, the person bearing this spirit of an ancestor. For clarity, in this book the spirit is called "djinn-spirit" and the person bearing it is called "djinn-bearer."

Gabbang: Native xylophone, consisting of a graduated series of bamboo bars, usually played by striking with a small wooden mallet.

Habagat: A southwest wind.

Hôs: A general purpose circular skirt worn by either men or women, overlapping in the front, often made of handwoven cloth.

Igal-djin: One of the "djinn" class, known for his or her skill in the art of dancing. The term may describe either the djinn-spirit or the djinn-bearer. The djinn-spirit, in practice, is always a real ancestor or *umboh*. The djinn-bearer is a person who, in the course of a ritual dance, enters into a trance during which he or she sometimes contacts the sacred and reveals the hidden.

Imam: A title for a religious person, not necessarily Muslim. The term is freely used and broadly describes any leader officiating in the ritual activities and expert in the field of the spirits. Knowing their personalities and natures, the imam is able to recognize their presence from their actions. As a consequence, he is able to diagnose the causes of any real (spiritual) sickness and prescribe methods for dealing with it. In this latter function, I have called him a "healing-imam."

Janggay, or *saling kukku*: Long metal nails, which dancers wear on their fingertips.

Kampong: The group of persons with whom some kin relationship exists, whether traceable or not. The same term can be used with reference only to the local cluster of kin households.

Kawasa: Any nonsacred power, such as human strength, wind power, electric power, etc.

Kulintang: Musical instrument composed of a set of gongs of different sizes, held on two stretched strings.

- Kumpit:** Name for a vast array of boats of different sizes and shapes, but generally resembling a heavy half-decked or decked boat, ten meters long, two meters wide, and two meters deep, propelled by engines. Some of these varieties are also known as *lancha*. The *kumpit* is increasingly replacing the traditional *lepa*.
- Lepa:** Traditional Badjao boat, now disappearing. Averaging eight meters in length and one meter and a half in breadth at the beam, it is flat. A mere half-meter deep, it is designed to navigate in shallow, reefy waters. Usually decked with single or double outriggers, it accommodates a residential crew by providing sleeping, eating, and storage areas.
- Ligo:** A flat basket for winnowing rice.
- Narkah:** Hell. The abode of evil spirits. Life with the *saitan*.
- Nipa:** A palm, *Nipa fruticans*, whose foliage is used for thatching.
- Nunuk:** The banyan tree or *Ficus bengalensis*, a tree of the mulberry family with branches that send out shoots which grow down to the soil and take root to form secondary trunks; also commonly known as the strangler tree.
- Pag-addat:** Respect, with special reference to external attitudes. The internal attitude is called *kasuddahan*.
- Pag-duwa-a Atahah Kalluman:** Prayer for long life. More than a formula or a set of formulae, this prayer is defined by (1) the intention of the worshiper asking for the long life, and (2) the spirits which are addressed for this purpose. Long life is a gift that can come only from Tuhan through Umboh.
- Pag-duwa-a Salamat:** Thanksgiving ritual, performed by an entire local community.
- Pag-hinang ni Tuhan:** A female rite of initiation, celebrated when a married woman gets pregnant for the first time. Such an event reveals the woman's ability to procreate, which is acknowledged as a gift of Tuhan. The literal translation of the term is "the work of Tuhan." This rite is a ceremonial presentation of the woman and her mystery, establishing her in her role of genetrix. It is another of the great morning rites.
- Pag-islam:** A very misleading name for circumcision. When taken literally, it suggests the idea of an initiation into Islam and the Islamic community. In truth, it has nothing to do with either. This is a clear case of a term borrowed uncritically.
- Pag-patulak:** A renewal ritual celebrated by an entire local community, when there is need to free the village from a serious condition such as sickness or famine.
- Pag-timbang:** A rite of renewal, used in situations that place a person's life in danger. Celebrated in the morning, it appears as a process creating a sacred center into which the person in danger gets re-created. The name means "weighing" or "balancing" and is suggested by the wooden pole used in the ritual. This incorrectly gives the idea of a scale.
- Pag-umbuh:** A solar ritual. It starts when the sun is at its zenith and closes, after a certain number of days, early in the morning. In the boat or in

the hut where celebrated, a specific orientation in space is sought, so that the sacred matter can be placed in an area identified as the "side of the head" or "side of Umboh." During the days when the sacred matter remains there, people, when lying down, keep their heads in that direction. This rite primarily honors Umboh and is connected with the cult of the ancestors and vegetation, the two halves of a whole—the *cosmos*—over which Umboh presides. Depending on the time when celebrated or the matter used, it is called (1) Umboh Pai Baha-o, (2) Umboh Pai, or (3) Umboh Boa Saluka.

Pakan sumangat: Literally means "feeding the spirit." A religious practice that takes many forms but always elaborates on a small communal meal. It aims at pleasing the spirits of the dead (*umagad*) who are supposed to take part in the meal.

Palay: Unhusked rice.

Palau: A name describing the poorest of the Badjaos, who live only on a boat. It has negative connotations.

Pandan: Screw pine. A plant of the genus *Pandanus*, having sword-shaped leaves arranged in a spiral, useful for making straw mats (*tepoh*).

Panday: Indigenous midwife, who assists women in childbearing and birth with her expertise and spiritual power.

Pang-igal or *pangalay*: Though meaning "dance" in general, it usually describes a local way of dancing, very formal, used on both profane and religious occasions.

Pettah or *buggoh*: Small boat carved from a tree trunk. Its shape recalls the Indian kayak; it is propelled by a single or double-bladed paddle.

Sabra: Light blouse of different colors worn, by the Badjaos, only for the dance during their night festivals.

Saitan: A spiritual being, absolute in nature, but which lives in the world and takes up residence in rocks or trees. A metaphor on the sacred and of man's relation to it.

Salim or *sahib* or *salip* (*sharif*): A powerful man or a holy man, divinized after death.

Sinama: The language of the Sama people; one of its variations is spoken by the Badjaos.

Sundok: The tombstone. Usually an unpolished stone, marking the location of the head of the corpse underneath. With the passing of time, it becomes the dwelling place of the person's spirit.

Sumangat: Spirit—often wrongly identified as "soul"—of things and of human beings, alive or dead. The spirit of the dead is more properly called *umagad*.

Surgah: Heaven. The abode of good spirits after death. Life with Tuhan.

Tepoh: A native straw mat, made of woven strips from the *pandan* (*Pandanus*) plant.

Tuhan: Old Malay word for "Lord." It describes the absolute, the god of the sky: the supreme divine being.

- Ula-ula:** Badjao flag. A huge banner approximately five feet square, with two narrow strips in the shape of a sharp pointed triangle (about eight feet long) extending from its sides. The configuration should evoke the stylized silhouette of a human body. The cloth displays symbolic colors and embroidery.
- Umboh:** A mythical being, which in the Badjao imagery appears as male in gender, very old and dressed in black. Created by Tuhan at the beginning of time, he is the first man and the Badjaos' ideal ancestor. He takes part in the "dialogue of life." Unique in his position, he is the prototype of man and acts on one side as a mediator between Tuhan and man; on the other as the fountainhead of life, center of the world, head of the whole cosmos. He will never die. It is from him that the Badjaos' religion takes its name.
- Umboh:** By extension, the same term (uncapitalized) is used to describe the real ancestors; that is, those who lived in the past and are still remembered. Often the spirits of these umboh take up residence in living persons (elders, parents, *panday*). In this case, the umboh-spirit is also called "djinn" (see *djin-spirit*). As a consequence, the living persons bearing them (see *djin-bearer*) have their status and role sanctioned. They themselves are addressed by others with the term of respect, "umboh."
- Umboh Boa (Buwa) Saluka:** The Umboh with the fruit (*boa*) of the coconut tree (*saluka*). The lesser of the two *pag-umboh* derived from the Umboh Pai Baha-o. Two fresh coconuts and a fresh branch from the same tree are required for its celebration. Its symbolism focuses on freshness, or greenness which is synonymous with vegetation.
- Umboh Pai:** The Umboh of the rice (*pai*). The more powerful of the two *pag-umboh* derived from the Umboh Pai Baha-o, which it closely resembles. To celebrate it one needs one mature coconut, some palay and the bark of a tree from which a basket is made to hold the palay. Symbolically, rice stands for fecundity and abundance.
- Umboh Pai Baha-o:** The Umboh of the new (*baha-o*) rice (*pai*). This is the primary *pag-umboh* from which all the others derive. It is a seasonal observation which takes place once a year, when the *habagat* blows and "the new palay appears in the market," broadly speaking, during the two or three months starting from September. In the course of the ritual, a special place is given to the head of the family. Celebrated in a festive mood, it is said to be the greatest Badjao festival.
- Umagad:** Spirit of the dead.

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This is a basic, limited, bibliography—directly dealing with the Badjao. For a comparative analysis on the various aspects of the religious phenomenon that crop up in the book, one must consult the vast bibliography now available on the subject.

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